WHO ARE THE PROMISE KEEPERS?
MATT LABASH

the weekly Standard

OCTOBER 6, 1997 $2.95

Has Fred Thompson Blown It?

by Matthew Rees

Inventing the Federal Government
DAVID BROOKS

Reforming Campaign Finance
THE EDITORS

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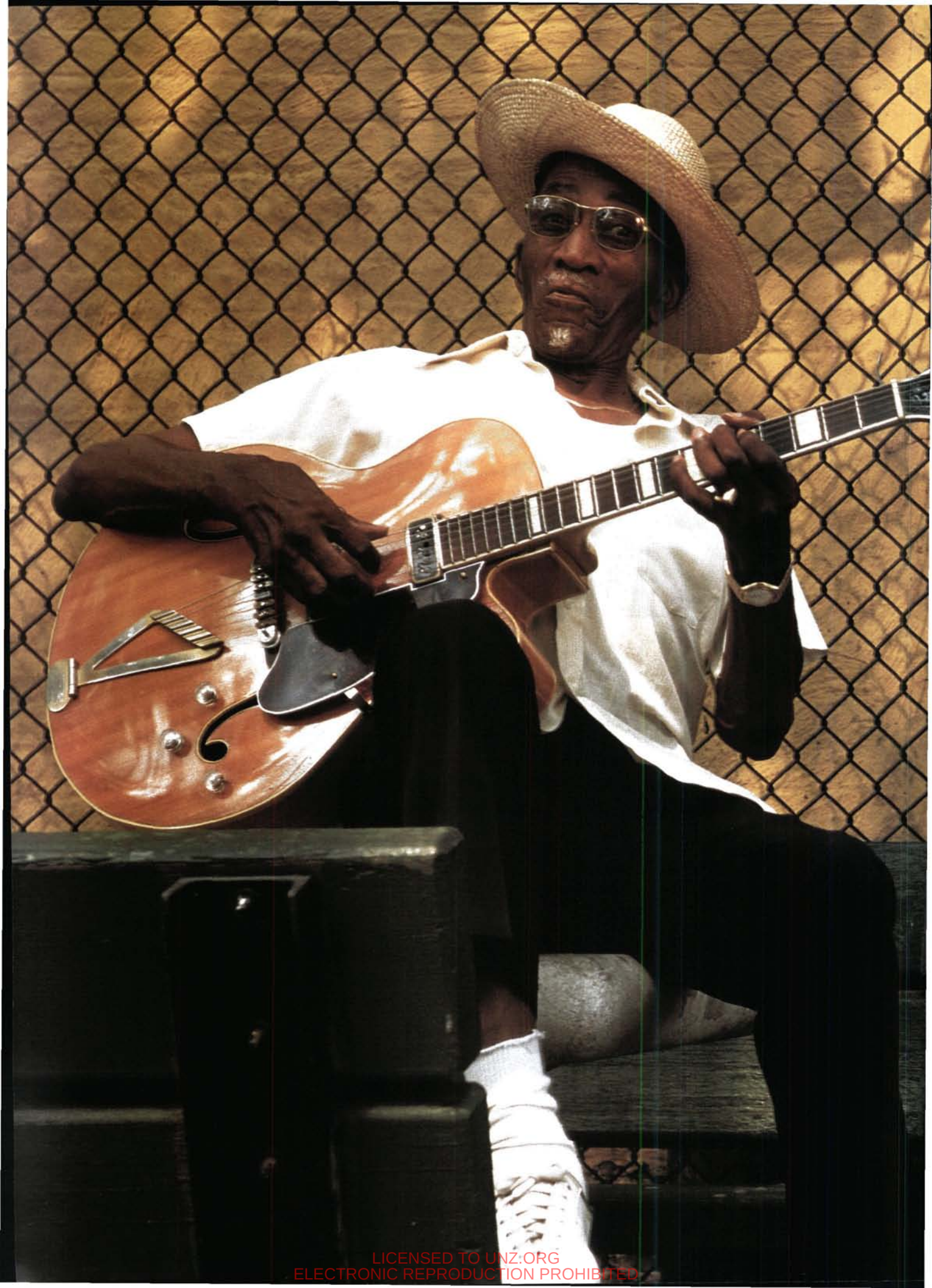

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"After a while, nothing helped my knees. I had to have something done."

WALTER PERRY

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly, except for the first week of January and the first week of September, by News America Publishing Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY, 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Send subscription orders to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153. Yearly subscriptions, $79.96; Canadian, $99.96; foreign postage extra. Cover price, $2.95 ($3.50 Canadian). Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage and handling). Subscribers: Please send all remittances, address changes, and subscription inquiries to: The Weekly Standard, Customer Service, P.O. Box 710, Radnor, PA 19088-0710. If possible include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. For subscription customer service, call 1-800-983-7600. Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The Weekly Standard Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is (202) 293-4900. Advertising Production: call Natalie Harwood, (610) 293-8540. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 930, Radnor, PA 19088-0930. Copyright 1996, News America Publishing Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a trademark of News America Publishing Incorporated.

The Audit Bureau Member

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Clinton's Contractors Dis Congress

If anything is clear in the murky debate about national education testing, it's that Congress doesn't want the Clinton administration to continue in the course it's been on: constructing tests of fuzzy math and whole language with the help of committees and contractors picked by the Education Department from the heart of the public school establishment.

In recent weeks, the Senate voted 87-13 to reassign the testing venture to an independent board, while the House voted 295-120 to call a halt to the whole thing. You might suppose the White House—which says salvaging this ill-begun venture is its top priority and is threatening vetoes if Congress kills it—would at least put its contractors on hold while it seeks to work with Congress. But no.

Last week, Georgetown's posh Four Seasons Hotel hosted a two-day meeting of test developers and several dozen "advisers" convened by the Council for Basic Education, which stands to earn a tidy sum for its part in the $13 million contract now in force. When nervous participants asked the Education Department if maybe the meeting ought not be deferred until Congress makes up its mind, Deputy Secretary Marshall Smith (who picked all these folks) said: Nothing doing.

Smith's Folly, as some Hill-dwellers term the testing scheme, continues at flank speed. "They're sticking their fingers in our eyes," complains a House staffer. Someone as deft at education politics as William Jefferson Clinton might be expected to know better. But the administration is getting cocky. Congress is scared to fight back. The contractors are getting paid. The hotel welcomes the business. And we foot the bill.

Piling On

In the guise of fighting bigotry, the American Jewish Committee has issued a pandering press release deploring "the racially insensitive remarks made recently by Lino Graglia, a University of Texas law professor, whose statements suggested that whites are superior to others."

Actually, as The Scrapbook pointed out last week, Graglia's "gaffe," for which he has in any case made public amends, was to tell a painful truth—namely, that all too often at elite universities, blacks and Hispanics "are not academically competitive with whites." This, of course, is the stated view of admissions officers at Graglia's university, as revealed in court documents from the *Hopwood* case, and the whispered view at practically every other American institution of higher education. This, after all, is why they all set up racially discriminatory admissions programs, except where judges and voters have forbidden the practice. But Graglia said nothing of racial "superiority," a word that came straight from the imagination of the publicists at the AJC, who are apparently eager to use this episode to flog a favorite house publication of theirs called "Bigotry on Campus."

The AJC's only other excuse for dragging Graglia's name through the mud seems to be that it once, rightly, denounced the notorious racist and anti-Semitic crank Leonard Jeffries, who taught students at CCNY that blacks ("sun people") were indeed superior to whites ("ice people"). Now the AJC says that Graglia's case "mirrors closely [sic] that of Jeffries." No, it doesn't, and the AJC owes Graglia an apology for the breathtakingly unfair comparison.

Restraint of Logic

Those who suspect that large parts of the federal government are essentially lunatic in their orientation now have the proof, at least as far as the Federal Trade Commission is concerned. Robert Pitofsky, the FTC chairman, was quoted last week in the *Wall Street Journal* discussing his agency's study of the proposed tobacco deal, which would require an exemption from the antitrust laws that the FTC administers. The exemption, Pitofsky feared, "would allow the tobacco companies to coordinate their behavior and raise prices far in excess of levels necessary to cover the annual payments and keep the extra profits for themselves.'"

In other words, the FTC chairman is concerned lest the tobacco agreement raise cigarette prices *too much*. Presumably, that would be "in restraint of trade," to use the quaint language of the Sherman Act. But of course

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the whole purpose of the tobacco deal is precisely to restrain trade. Indeed, the federal strategy is to reduce smoking, especially teen-age smoking, by raising the price of cigarettes.

But apparently not too high. If it is a choice between more kids getting lung cancer and the tobacco companies making more money, the FTC knows exactly where it stands: The kids will just have to cough and like it. The main thing is to keep the tobacco companies from earning excess profits, public health be damned.

Clueless Republicans

California Republicans are proving gutless on the issue of ending bilingual education in the state, fearing that they will be accused of Hispanic-bashing. This astonishing posture by a party that backed previous ballot measures ending racial preferences and benefits for illegal immigrants infuriated maverick Republican Ron Unz, who is spearheading the "English for the Children" ballot measure and who is pro-immigration and opposed 1994's anti-immigration Prop 187. Unz called the party leadership "cowardly" in a *Washington Times* story last week. They're also foolish, and look silly, as well. The same story quoted Republican Assembly leader Bill Leonard saying, "I recommend that the party do nothing."

Latino Democrats like Fernando Vega, meantime, are signing on to the anti-bilingual crusade. Vega, who put up several "English for the Children" campaign signs in the front yard of his Redwood City home, reports a stream of Spanish-speaking mothers from the neighborhood knocking on the door to sign up their children for what they assume are English classes taught by him. They complain that their children aren't learning enough English at school. In any case, Latino parents seem more willing to take on the liberal education establishment than much of the California GOP.

Are Puns Tortious?

A tortuous (or is it *torturous*?) solecism was committed in the lead op-ed piece of the *New York Times* last Wednesday, right next to William Safire, he of "On Language." This kind of writing ought to be quashed (or is it *squashed*?) and spurned (or is it *scorned*?). Lawyer Donna Harrison was writing about her decision to switch her children from private back into public schools. She described her disappointed hopes "that the curriculum standards endorsed by the Schools Chancellor, Rudy Crew, were vigorous." Does she mean rigorous? Or does the New York City Public Schools have some Strength Through Joy program that we ought to know about?

As they say of verbal precision: If you've got it, flout it.

Clintonism of the Week

Ron Carey on the illegal fund-raising efforts on behalf of his campaign for the presidency of the Teamsters union: "If there is a victim here, I certainly am the victim. What went on here is a complete betrayal of everything we stood for."

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Riding the Wave of Tears For Di

David Frum's was a refreshing perspective on the world's reaction to the death of Princess Diana ("The Death of Duty," Sept. 22). I take exception, however, with the one-sided blame Frum places on Diana regarding the breakup of her marriage. Prince Charles, after all, admitted to the British people that he was the first to stray from his marriage. He would have been foolhardy to have expected, in this age of de-stigmatized divorce, that Diana would have silently abided his infidelity. Remember, too, that it was Charles who chose to marry a commoner whose views surely matched contemporary expectations about marriage and infidelity. This marriage of two radically different value-systems was from the beginning doomed to fail.

MICHAEL COHEN
BROOKLYN, NY

It was quite daring for THE WEEKLY STANDARD to go against popular opinion and sympathy to publish Frum's opinions on the death of Diana.

His article was a jolt of reality. Though no one can diminish the human dimensions of Princess Diana's tragic death, the worldwide outpouring of grief may have another explanation.

Just as those individuals holding candles in the vigils for John Lennon were lamenting the loss of their youth more than the loss of John Lennon, the death of Diana represented another kind of loss: the loss of a dream.

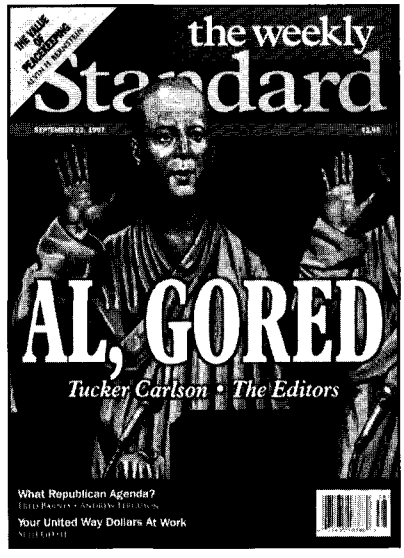
For women everywhere, the story of Diana was a fairy tale come true. Here was a commoner—a wealthy and well-connected commoner, but a commoner just the same—discovered by a Prince Charming. Diana's sad and untimely end shattered the dream and brought home the painful truth that fairy tales do not come true, that there never will be a Prince Charming, and that women will never become princesses.

ED ROSENBLUM
BROOKLYN, NY

Frum misunderstands the mourning for Diana, attributing public grief to the demise of the deference to duty and tradition. He wonders at the British public's disenchantment with royal reserve and its astonishing embrace of Diana. He accuses Diana of breaking up her marriage because "it failed to live up to her Barbara Cartland fantasies." If this were true, fidelity was a fantasy her husband destroyed early in their marriage. Despite her husband's betrayal and the heartlessness of the royals, Diana kept her dignity.

What of the Prince of Wales's devotion to duty? Certainly it wasn't directed toward his wife and sons, who doubtless suffered from the divorce Charles initiated.

Frum doesn't see that what the public instinctively rejected was duty and tradition when it became a matter of style over substance—substance being a genuine regard for one's fellow man.



Diana's gentle and tender heart, by contrast, overflowed with affection. She was universally empathetic. Her husband was not.

Had Prince Charles been an honorable man, he might have commanded greater respect. Instead, the public witnessed vulgar indiscretion and hypocrisy. Royal self-restraint was seen for what it was: emotional retardation. Always an outsider, Diana was exciting by contrast.

This explains the spontaneous outpouring of grief over her death. For a few memorable years, we had the pleasure of seeing in Diana a rare thing: She was the very vision of femininity. In an age of cynicism, Diana radiated charm, grace, and beauty. For all her wealth and position, she remained naively trusting, and was easy prey for the unscrupulous. Considering her unfaithful husband, the James Hewitts who exploited her unhappiness, and the journalists who used her, it's clear that in Diana's brief life gentlemen were scarce. It is to all of this that people have responded with such intensity.

CHERYL A. HARGIS
GAITHERSBURG, MD

David Frum is right in viewing Diana's death as a sign of the decline of duty. But he would be wrong to view every soggy hanky as a banner for self-indulgence.

Considering that the media love a purple metaphor, I was surprised that no one saw in that explosive car wreck a wider symbolism. The relationship between the royals' abdication of morality and the destruction in that tunnel seemed largely invisible. This is probably so because, set against the backdrop of society's current moral state, it is camouflaged to most eyes.

Diana may not have been a hero. Still, let me indulge in some of that "overwrought Romanticism of the Victorians": I would say that even the angels probably sobbed.

PATRICIA SETTE
CONCORD, MA

Frum's defense of stiff upper-lips is marred by one error: Elton John's piano could not have been "placed atop the grave of Jane Austen" because she is buried in Winchester Cathedral. That fine lady did not suffer this modern indignity!

MARK A. WILSON
WOOSTER, OH

DAVID FRUM RESPONDS: ***I confess, I broke the first law of journalism: Never, ever, trust your memory.***

Zookeeper or Peacekeeper?

Alvin Bernstein's endorsement of peacekeeping ("The Truth About Peacekeeping," Sept. 22) was strange and ill-timed: The Aug. 25 *Washington Post* showed U.S. peacekeepers in Bosnia contributing to "livestock restoration"—in other words, taking care of cows. It also was disclosed that our troops are preparing to use "sponge

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grenades" and "dye bombs" against potential enemies. A few months earlier, the Clinton administration had discussed using our soldiers to guard rain forests in South America.

Peacekeeping operations are humiliating and demoralizing to our troops, and they undermine the reason for having a military in the first place. Moreover, some operations are actually illegal. Congress has failed to notice that U.S. troops are in Bosnia in violation of the NATO Treaty, which authorizes defensive actions only on behalf of NATO members. Yet Bosnia never belonged to NATO, and no one there started a war against the United States.

On another front, Sen. Mitch McConnell has documented that the operation in Macedonia has never been approved by Congress as required under the U.N. Participation Act. This is one reason why former Army Specialist Michael New is continuing his battle to overturn his court-martial and discharge from the service. His so-called crime was that he refused to wear a U.N. uniform and carry a U.N. identification card in Macedonia.

There is also the issue of cost. A March 1996 General Accounting Office report found U.N. operations cost the United States some $6.6 billion over a three-year period. Only $1.8 billion was counted against our U.N. dues. Most of the rest came out of military-readiness accounts.

CLIFF KINCAID
OWINGS, MD

ON COMPUTER MISUSERS

Congressional oversight is an important element in the American political process, as noted in "Guess Who's Misusing a Computer?" (Scrapbook, Sept. 22). But your claim that the discovery of a computer diversion in China would not have happened but for congressional pressure is dead wrong.

The president's computer-policy decision in 1995 included a requirement that companies keep and provide to the government data on their exports. When the Bureau of Export Administration first learned of possible diversions last January, we immediately opened an investigation. Shortly afterwards, we told companies to provide the records they were required to keep. Review of those records led to the investigation of a diversion to China.

The first congressional hearing regarding previously revealed Russian diversions did not occur until April 15, by which time we had already received the requested data and our review was well under way. Your charge that this reflects "carelessness" on the part of the administration is unfounded.

WILLIAM A. REINSCH
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
WASHINGTON, DC

The revelations mount: We are told of direct Chinese connections to the 1996 elections, the discovery of religious persecution throughout China, and American supercomputers' being directed to the Chinese military. One has to wonder: After the direct threats to Taiwan by the Chinese military; after the genocide perpetrated against Tibet; after the imprisonment of countless Christian clergymen—will there be some sense of shame evident in President Clinton, in Speaker Gingrich, in Congress, or in the American people? We have ignored human rights and sold our heritage to the highest bidder.

PETER J. RIGA
HOUSTON, TX

THE GAY SIDE OF HISTORY

Roger Clegg has joined the effort to stop the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would apply a limited prohibition against anti-gay discrimination in most places of employment ("The ENDA Big Government," Sept. 22). In arguing against its merits, Clegg manages to raise a panoply of arguments and premises to reach a simple conclusion: Lots of people don't like gays for good reasons, and they should have the right to stigmatize them or discriminate against them.

It is clear that something else is going on beneath the surface which has nothing to do with a bill in Congress. It is much more about the clash of two different sets of values in America, and in which direction conservatives and the Republican party will go.

On the one side, there are people like Clegg who believe that discrimination against gays is appropriate. Inflicting "social, even economic penalties" against gays is a right that government cannot breach, lest "traditional moralists" be unable to maintain their way of life. On the other side, there is the majority of Americans who believe that merit should be the sole criterion by which any American should be judged in the workplace, and that different standards for different people is discrimination, plain and simple.

Thankfully, in every conflict preceding the debate over anti-gay discrimination, Clegg's side has been defeated because America has always ended up on the side of fairness.

Other conservative activists, such as Ward Connerly, are leading a growing movement that enshrines merit as the sole measure of a person's worth on the job. The movement seeks to throw preferences and discrimination into the dust bin of history. Connerly is consistent in his opposition to preferences and discrimination. It's unfortunate that his critics on the left as well as the right cannot say the same for themselves.

Clegg calls on Republicans to join his side, stop ENDA, and fight to preserve discrimination as a positive social tool. He advocates this despite the fact that Republicans in recent years have done a terrible job of bringing more minorities into the party. Its message of limited government too often has been contradicted by the desire of social conservatives—mainly white men from the South and West—to use government as a tool of punitive social engineering.

Hopefully, conservatives and the Republican party won't choose to be on the wrong side of history yet again.

KEVIN IVERS
LOG CABIN REPUBLICANS
WASHINGTON, DC

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Casual

My Taxicab Confession

We should have noticed something was up when a call to Yellow Cab from my friend Tracy's apartment brought a Checker cab to her doorstep. Since when are the Yellow and Checker guys even on speaking terms? But, then, headed out for a night on the town with the girls—Tracy, Kelly, Kerry, and me—who pays attention to details?

The front seat was broken, so we were told by the handsome, young, black cab driver; all four of us would have to squeeze into the back. We happily piled in, noisy, jostling, and giggling. As the cab pulled away, I noticed that the interior was awash in bright fluorescent lights radiating from above the front window.

"So what's with the crazy bright lights?" I asked.

"Oh, just my own security system, I don't want someone sneaking up on me in the dark," said the cabbie, who was quick to prompt a conversation. "Out for a big night on the town?" he prodded.

"Of course," we responded.

Before long the questions started getting more personal: "Are you all single?"

"Not this one," Tracy declared as she pointed to me.

"How long have you been married?" he asked.

"One year," I said.

"Happy?" he asked.

"Very," I said.

"She eloped," Kelly volunteered on my behalf.

"You eloped!" he exclaimed. "That's so cool."

"Tell him the story," Tracy chimed in.

"No no, it's such a long story," I protested.

"Who cares, I love good stories," said the cabbie.

It is a good story, I have to admit, and friends are always pumping me to retell it. And truth be told, I do love retelling it. I described how my husband's and my romantic adventure began when we crossed paths with each other at Dulles airport. You see, we had been engaged for a while, and then briefly disengaged. So over a late-day airport drink, Eric proposed that we forget about engagements and just elope instead. Europe seemed like a romantic spot and so we were off. We were too late for a transatlantic flight from Dulles so we cabbed to National, flew to JFK, cabbed to La Guardia, and just barely caught the last plane to London. Of course, we knew nothing of "posting banns," the English version of a two-week waiting period, which did complicate matters. So we ended up returning after a lovely, hectic weekend to the courthouse in Leesburg, Va.—about ten minutes away from our starting point at Dulles—where the only thing we had to do to get married was swear that we weren't brother and sister.

At every point in the story, the curious cabbie plied me with questions. "What did he say to you in the airport?" "How did you feel when that happened? . . ." Caught up in telling all, I didn't realize we were driving all over Washington in a very roundabout route to our destination. Tracy did question the cab driver's rather erratic navigational skills.

"It won't cost you any more," he reassured us.

Just as I had gotten through the grand finale, we arrived. Purses were opening when our friendly cabbie turned around and calmly started reciting a prepared script: He was working with HBO on a "documentary" series called *Taxicab Confessions*. He was certain they would love to use my story. In fact, we could all be on TV if I would just sign this release. Collectively, we'd get $500, and the cab ride was free!

We all laughed nervously. Could this guy be a kook? Then Kelly pointed to the front window. "Hey, there's the hidden camera," cleverly concealed by a cheesy flower decal. It all clicked—the "security lights," the "broken front seat." This was for real, and I had been duped.

For a split second, as I looked at my starry-eyed friends, I thought that maybe this wasn't so bad. Maybe we would be discovered! But wait. Who said I ever wanted to be discovered telling all on HBO?

While I was struggling with the temptations of fleeting fame, out of nowhere (actually, out of a car that had been tailing us all the way) came Amber, HBO's producer. She popped up in the window and began to plead with me. "It is such a romantic story," she sighed dramatically. "Don't you want 5 million people hear it?"

Yes, the story may be romantic, but on reflection I found that I really did not want to join the undignified ranks of the talk-show freaks haunting the sets of Sally, Oprah, Maury, and all the rest. They finally let me go when I promised to consider the offer overnight. Sure enough, Sunday afternoon Amber called. By then my husband was manning the phones, and her powers of persuasion got her nowhere.

So the alleged 5 million viewers will miss out on at least one honest story dishonestly obtained. These days we talk so much about the invasion of privacy visited on the rich and famous. But what about the rest of us?

Jennifer L. Felten

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the weekly Standard

Reforming Campaign Finance

Everything you know about the current politics of campaign-finance reform is wrong. Minority leader Tom Daschle has insisted, and the newspapers have reported, over and over again, that the Senate's entire 45-member Democratic caucus enthusiastically endorses the McCain-Feingold "Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 1997." Daschle has further claimed that he thwarted a conspiracy by majority leader Trent Lott to drown McCain-Feingold in the rush of legislative business near November's scheduled congressional adjournment. And Daschle last week produced a letter from Bill Clinton threatening to invoke the president's authority to keep the Senate in session until Lott gives McCain-Feingold proper consideration. That consideration is now guaranteed—indeed, Lott has already begun the formal debate—and any up-or-down vote on the measure will probably command a majority of senators. Only a Republican filibuster, led by Kentucky's Mitch McConnell and sanctioned by Lott, will prevent it from passing the Senate. According to Tom Daschle.

Except that none of this is true, exactly. McCain-Feingold, introduced on January 21 as "S.25," never had 45 Democratic cosponsors. It had only 30, and Tom Daschle himself was not one of them. In any case, S.25, in the written form it took most of this year, will most definitely *not* pass the Senate this month or next, with or without a filibuster. Because for all practical purposes, that legislation became obsolete more than four months ago.

On May 22, McCain and Russ Feingold of Wisconsin announced an intention to amend their then-stalled 87-page bill to boost its prospects. The proposed substitute, described in a vague, two-page handout, involved slight adjustments to the original. Most notably, the senators abandoned their call for a flat—and unconstitutional—ban on political action committee (PAC) contributions to federal candidates. In its place, they suggested restricting PAC contributions, adjusted for inflation, to one-sixth the level authorized by the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974. This provision, which would induce candidates to solicit from twice as many PACs in order to raise the same amount of cash, made no sense as a "reform." Nor did it fix the constitutional problem, since the courts would likely rule it a violation of the First Amendment.

By early last month, the "revised" McCain-Feingold bill had clearly failed in its purpose, winning just two additional cosponsors. So the authors went back to the drawing board and have now emerged with a radically scaled-back, third version. The PAC contribution limit is gone. The very heart of the old plan—a complicated and (sigh) unconstitutional system of financial benefits and penalties for federal candidates who agree or refuse to observe quasi-voluntary campaign-spending limits—is gone, for that matter. As of this writing, it's still hard to tell precisely what's in the new bill; all there is to go on is a six-sentence fact sheet given out at a press conference on September 22.

It was this undrafted legislation that Daschle claimed his troops unanimously support, along with Republican senators John McCain of Arizona, Fred Thompson of Tennessee, and Susan Collins of Maine. It was this still undrafted legislation, Daschle loudly protested, that Trent Lott and Mitch McConnell plan to scuttle with a filibuster. And it is through this prism of partisan by-play—Democrats lined up as a bloc in favor of "reform"; the GOP lined up nearly completely against it—that Daschle hopes the country will view campaign-finance law next year.

But things are not at all what they seem, substantively or politically.

First off, the ultimate iteration of S.25, after McCain unveils it for a vote this week or next, will remain a very bad bill, for two basic reasons.

The courts have repeatedly ruled that so long as private citizens and organizations do not explicitly endorse a political candidate, they retain an unlimited First Amendment right to advance their views through "issue advocacy." It is true that this principle produces a public-policy anomaly. In an election year, the American Widget Coalition may fund a multi-million-dollar advertising blitz that argues Senator X

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is wrong on widgets. And Senator X, constrained by existing fund-raising rules, may not be able—during his own campaign—to respond at equal volume. Incumbent politicians hate this risk, and McCain-Feingold will propose a solution. It will propose to suck independent, "candidate-related" issue advocacy fully under federal, contribution-limited regulatory supervision.

We're not entirely unsympathetic to the problem of resource-constrained federal candidates' losing control of their campaigns to outside groups. But this proposal is one the Constitution will not admit. The First Amendment does not grant Congress the authority to quiet praise or criticism of elected officials simply because Congress determines that the people issuing that praise or criticism have "too much" influence.

Next, S.25 will prohibit "soft-money" contributions to the campaign committees of national political parties. Earlier this year, Daschle joined House minority leader Richard Gephardt at a press conference to endorse a constitutional amendment designed to allow a ban on soft money. Nowadays, Daschle pretends that no such amendment is necessary; the Constitution already allows such a ban, he says. He was right before: He is wrong today. Soft-money donations are funds raised by national political parties for the purpose of supporting their state and local candidates and affiliates. The funds are distributed to those candidates and affiliates, and then spent on non-federal election activities under state law. By federalizing and regulating all national-party financial support of state-based candidates and parties, a soft-money ban would deeply injure the federal system of the Constitution.

If it takes a Republican filibuster to block McCain-Feingold, so be it. But here's where things get interesting. For it is a truth rarely acknowledged in public Washington discourse that Tom Daschle is *depending* on a Republican filibuster to block McCain-Feingold. Democrats love to decry soft money, and love to have the GOP do the dirty work of preserving it. Because the fact is that Democrats are, as a proportion of their total fund-raising, vastly more dependent on soft money than Republicans are. A ban on soft money would erase slightly less than a quarter of total Republican financial resources in any given election cycle. It would erase more than a *third* of total Democratic resources. The Democratic party cannot afford to do without soft money.

What if Trent Lott and his Senate GOP colleagues quashed McCain-Feingold—as they should—but then immediately proposed a campaign-finance-reform measure that credibly and constitutionally addressed soft money? Lott will introduce an official GOP alternative during the current debate. It should include an increase—call it an "inflation adjustment"—in the existing, 1974-era limits on "hard-money" federal contributions. This is a very good idea, one endorsed by a growing number of political scientists as a means to stimulate the hard-money system and cut down on the ubiquitous "money chase." This would make it easier for candidates— especially challengers—to raise the money they need to run competitive campaigns.

But the Lott proposal *may* also include a contribution limit—say, $100,000—on soft-money donations to the national political parties. This provision could be justified as a deterrent to the kind of "appearance of corruption" that has so plagued President Clinton's John Huang operation at the DNC in recent months. And the Supreme Court would likely accept that justification as consistent with the First Amendment.

How amusing it would be to watch Tom Daschle and company respond to such a proposal, which would enjoy the support of a clear majority of senators—more than have ever supported McCain-Feingold. Daschle has already acknowledged that he's "willing to look at caps on soft money" and is unwilling to say "I'm going to oppose" lifting current hard-money caps. Would he mount a *Democratic* filibuster against that kind of legislation? That seems politically infeasible.

Particularly if Republicans refuse to give Daschle any excuse. It's not clear that most Republican senators yet understand how completely in the campaign-finance driver's seat they could find themselves—if they act with conviction and imagination. Unfortunately, it still seems to be GOP dogma that the issue is a "loser," that the best approach is to get in and out of it as quickly as possible, and that the best result is no result. There are members of the Senate Republican caucus who accordingly still figure they will include in their own campaign-finance bill provisions that Democrats simply cannot swallow—like sharp curbs on political disbursements of labor-union money. That would probably kill any chance of successful reform legislation in this session.

This would probably be a mere tactical victory. Of course, no bill is better than a bad bill. But the Senate Republicans have a sudden and surprising chance to take a good, first step for the country—and for their party: Introduce campaign-finance legislation that would curb soft money and reinvigorate the hard-money system by increasing those limits. In other words, restrict the power of special interests and strengthen the hands of citizens. Why not take it?

—David Tell, for the Editors

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JANET RENO CLOUSEAU

by Tod Lindberg

GEE, IN ALL THE EXCITEMENT of demanding that Attorney General Janet Reno seek the appointment of an independent counsel to investigate Al Gore's fund-raising activities—including saber-rattling about possible impeachment proceedings against Reno if she didn't—Republicans clean forgot to demand that she seek the appointment of an independent counsel to investigate *Bill Clinton*'s fund-raising activities. Oops. Imagine the embarrassment when Reno, having announced she was starting the 30-day clock on a preliminary inquiry that could eventually lead to a special prosecutor for Gore, also announced she was doing the same for Clinton.

In fact, however, the embarrassment was Reno's. For months now, Reno has been probing the limits of her authority *not* to seek an independent counsel in the fund-raising scandal. Now she merely looks like she has blundered into it.

Under the law, Reno could have asked for an independent counsel to investigate Democrats' fund-raising at any time—if she saw an actual or potential conflict in the Justice Department's rooting around in its masters' dirty campaign laundry. The Iran-contra scandal broke in November 1986. Attorney General Ed Meese asked for an independent counsel December 4, and Lawrence Walsh was on the job December 19. The current scandal goes back almost a year, with Reno insisting all along that her own investigators in the Public Integrity Section of the Justice Department were perfectly capable of conducting a thorough and impartial investigation.

But according to the independent-counsel law, once the attorney general receives "specific and credible" information that a person covered by the law may have committed a crime, she *must* start the 30-day clock. At the end, unless she finds that the information is neither specific nor credible, she *must* begin a preliminary investigation lasting no more than 90 days. At the end of that time, unless the attorney general finds overwhelming evidence that there is no basis for proceeding, she *must* ask a special judicial panel to appoint a counsel. In practice, there has been no instance in which the 90-day clock has started running and a counsel was not ultimately appointed.

From the start of the fund-raising scandal, Reno steadfastly maintained that none of the numerous questionable activities that were surfacing in the press, in congressional investigations, or as a result of her own investigation was sufficient to trigger the mandatory provision of the law. And this was, quite simply, driving Republicans nuts.

What about Gore's presence at an illegal fund-raiser at a Buddhist temple, as a result of which nuns used other people's money to make contributions to Democrats? What about the phone calls he admitted having made from his office soliciting campaign contributions? As early as spring, Republicans were writing furious letters to Reno demanding to know why she hadn't acted to seek a counsel. Her answers—first in a March letter she wrote the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Orrin Hatch, and then in testimony before that committee—were entirely unsatisfactory to the Republicans, whose banks of lawyers found her understanding of the law either grossly incompetent or willfully obtuse.

In her March letter, she contended rather blithely that since the money Gore solicited from his office phone was "soft money"—designed for general party-building activities, not to advocate the election of any particular candidate—the law that makes it illegal to solicit contributions on federal property didn't apply. Those contributions would have to have been "hard dollars." So much for the phone calls.

Republican lawyers dispute the way she was construing the law, and were prepared to fight it out over what the law meant. They would then be positioned to use the fact of the dispute itself to argue that the matter should be resolved by an independent counsel. Strangely enough, however, they didn't have to. Reno's position was thoroughly undercut by the emergence of additional facts.

Some of the money Gore solicited, as Bob Woodward reported in the *Washington Post*, did end up in hard-money accounts at the Democratic National Committee. In fact, the DNC routinely siphoned off the first $20,000 of each big contribution for deposit in a hard-money account ($5,000 less than the maximum an individual can give per year).

Uh-oh. The clear implication of Reno's letter had been that if Gore were dialing for hard dollars, the law would apply. And it would also apply to any dialing for dollars the president might have done.

The Gore and Clinton legal teams dispute that implication. They have offered other interpretations of the laws in question, arguing that they may not apply to the president and vice president, and that the solicitation takes place not where the solicitor is but where the object of his attentions is. The law, they say, was designed to create a safe haven for public servants, so that their political bosses wouldn't be able to put the arm on them for contributions on the job. That doesn't explain, however, why members of Congress, mindful of the same law, routinely leave their offices to

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make similar fund-raising calls.

Reno could yet reach either of the above two White House-approved conclusions and pull the plug on the independent-counsel machinery. But that would raise the question of why she chose not to make those points on previous occasions—for example, in her letter to Hatch. She would look bad, and Republicans would probably find increased traction for their argument that far from being independent and impartial, Reno was merely looking for any straw she could clutch at to get her boss off the hook.

And there is one additional little problem: How exactly did Reno reach the conclusion that formed the basis of her March reply? What led her to think that the money raised was all soft money?

There is no possible answer to that question that reflects well on the attorney general. In her letter, she was both dismissive and authoritative: This was soft money, period. She also happened to be flat wrong. What kind of investigation could she be conducting if the conclusions she was reaching were so wrong? Reno herself said that the first she heard of the hard money was from Bob Woodward's story. Later, it turned out that Justice Department investigators had the relevant documents pointing to the hard-money deposits in their possession, but simply hadn't examined them. One claim was that investigators were focusing on bigger matters. (Bigger than the actions of the president and vice president?) In any case, after a round or two of finger-pointing, Reno decided on a shakeup of the 92-member team. She brought in a new chief and shortly thereafter made the announcements about Gore and Clinton.

The picture Reno has sought to paint all along is that of an attorney general and an investigation doggedly and independently pursuing the facts and the law wherever they might lead. The picture Republicans have been painting is that of an attorney general stonewalling furiously to protect the White House, spewing legal chaff in an effort to obfuscate the clear meaning of the independent counsel law and the criminal laws that might have been broken.

The picture that emerged from the hard-money debacle was rather different—a bumbling, Clouseau-like operation in the Public Integrity Section of the Department of Justice. And if it should happen that those conducting it *were* trying to avoid casting their net widely enough to catch the big fish, they bungled that, too. White House officials have been complaining, not for attribution, that in putting so much weight on the hard money-soft money distinction, Reno painted herself into a corner. They are right: The Janet Reno that emerges from this fiasco looks either craven, or corrupt, or incompetent, or stupid. There's very little else to be said.

***Tod Lindberg is editorial page editor of* The Washington Times.**

U.N.BELIEVABLE

by Christopher Caldwell

TED TURNER'S OFFER TO GIVE A BILLION dollars to the "cash-strapped" (as it's invariably described) United Nations has not been out of the papers since he sprang it on an audience at the United Nations Association award ceremonies in mid-September. It is, by any standard, one hell of an offer. But an offer of what? Because the CNN founder and Time-Warner vice chairman made the gift so impetuously, accountants are still scrambling to work out the details. Two weeks later, only three things are certain: First, the gift won't be a billion dollars. Second, it won't do anything to solve the United Nations' "cash-strapped" status. And third, it won't go to the U.N. at all.

Not that Turner is making money off the deal, as *USA Today* suggested in a recent article: Charitable gifts such as his can only be deducted up to 30 percent of the donor's income. Nor is the avoidance of capital-gains taxes on his Time-Warner stock the issue, since Turner wants to hold onto all 62.4 million shares of it, anyway. But spread over 10 years, with tax deductions and inflation, the gift will come to less than a billion dollars. What's more, Turner has insulated himself from downside risk by saying he'll donate a billion dollars or the value of his Time-Warner stock, *whichever is lower*. Since no one thinks the stock market is undervalued, one could easily see the gift winding up at a *fraction* of a billion dollars.

Turner may not be history's biggest giver—Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller each gave away about $5 billion at current rates—but his contribution is certainly the most heavily spun donation in the annals of philanthropy. His only comments on the gift came the day after he announced it, in the course of a tightly controlled conference call. Turner managed to convey both that he had made the decision without the help of his financial advisers, and that they had

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tried to dissuade him from making a similar gift weeks earlier. And for all Turner's hammering at the "stinginess" of Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, among other billionaires, it should be remembered that Gates earlier this year made a $215 million gift to increase Internet access in schools and libraries. When Turner was Gates's age, he was giving next to nothing to charity. Prior to Turner's U.N. pledge, in fact, Gates had given five times as much to charity in 1997 as Turner had given in his entire life.

Turner wants to use the gift to shame not just other billionaires, but also the U.S. government, which is $900 million in arrears to the U.N. by congressional estimates (the U.N. says the figure is $1.5 billion). It's been widely reported that the billion dollars is the equivalent of the U.N.'s annual budget. In fact, the U.N.'s operating and peacekeeping expenses come to $2.6 billion a year, so Turner's gift, which will be separated into 10 tranches of a maximum value of $100 million, will cover less than 4 percent of the budget. Turner wants the gift to go to "non-administrative programs" involving children, land mines, environment, health. He thus gets credit for a piece of financial rescue in a way that arrogates to him the lion's share of the credit for the organization's most popular programs.

But wait a second: Turner can't actually give the money to the U.N. in the first place, because of two basic problems that he could be expected to notice even without the help of his accountants. First, Article 17 of the U.N. Charter permits only member states to contribute to the organization's operating expenses. And a 501(c)3 charitable foundation of the sort Turner will certainly establish to administer the gifts can only give to qualifying charities—and the U.N. is not one.

So Turner is doing something very big—but it's something other than giving money to the United Nations. What it looks like he's doing is setting up a charitable powerhouse whose board will be tightly under his control. Under relevant tax law, such a foundation would have to give away only 5 percent per year of its net worth. If Turner chooses to spend only the foundation's income, rather than its capital, he will find himself at the end of a decade exercising near-absolute authority over a globe-spanning multi-billion-dollar foundation, and the only one that enjoys a semi-official relationship with the United Nations.

Even if we assume he gives all the money away, there's a big quo that Turner gets for his quid. Sources close to Turner's thinking say he hopes to win the Nobel Peace Prize and has actively sought for years to drum up a nomination. Originally under the impression that his creation of the first global network and his establishment of the "Goodwill Games" in the 1980s would do the trick, he may now realize that he has to sweeten his résumé somewhat. Turner, who throughout his career at CNN and Time Warner has always shown an uncanny sense of political timing and an ability to anticipate trends, may be reacting to the death of Princess Diana—specifically to the outpouring of sympathy for her charitable work.

So here's what Turner gets: For well under a billion dollars, he is being hailed as the world's only billion-dollar philanthropist. He's getting credit for bailing out an international organization that he cannot, by law, even contribute to. And before he has given a penny, this heretofore stingy plutocrat has cast himself as the conscience of philanthropic circles, and made himself synonymous with the world's most popular charities.

No one should doubt that this is a gift of huge proportions. But no one should doubt, either, that Ted Turner has already got his money's worth.

Christopher Caldwell is senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

HOW MICROSOFT PAYS ITS BILLS

by Daniel Seligman

WHY DOES BILL GATES wear his hair in bangs? This question had never previously infiltrated the left hemisphere of my cerebral cortex, where the big issues get pondered, and I am not even sure I was conscious of the Gatesian hairdo until just the other day. That is when I found myself staring at his boyish visage on the computer screen, watching his lips move soundlessly. The absence of sound reflected problems with the CD-ROM that came bundled with *The Road Ahead*, Bill's huge-selling book.

The CD-ROM includes various hypertext gimmicks you can fool around with. One option, which I instantly exercised: "Join Bill Gates for a discussion of how technology will shape our future." This brought up a screen in which you can choose from a number of softball questions—e.g., "What has been your key to success?"—and then watch Bill himself, responding animatedly. Sometimes I could hear what he was say-

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ing, but usually there was no sound, and I am no lip-reader. So naturally I called tech support, where the technician began by asking whether I had a yellow disk. I said, yes, my CD was yellow, and he then stated that the yellow ones are defective. He is sending me a new one.

Meanwhile, I have succeeded in actually hearing the key to Bill's success. The answer he serves up is in part a genuinely interesting capsulization of the strategic thinking that allowed him to get Microsoft out front, in part a klutzy and unconvincing effort to cast himself as a humble participant in "a great success story that it's been incredibly fun to be part of." Zheesh.

I bought *The Road Ahead* for serious business reasons. Main reason: As a vendor who occasionally sells prose materials to Microsoft, I was looking to gain insights into a major anomaly in our dealings. The anomaly concerned the company's payment practices. Microsoft is widely viewed as one of the best-run companies in human history, but this view is not always clove to by folks dealing with its Accounts Payable Department. AP is in truth a major menace to those of us doing business with Microsoft's webzines.

Normally, when you sell an article to a 'zine, be it of the web or maga variety, you cut a deal with the editors about length, subject matter, time of delivery, and pay. The deal may or may not be in writing, but either way, the transaction is reasonably simple. At Microsoft, it is complex and bewildering. The paperwork goes on and on, and getting a check out of Accounts Payable is a very big deal indeed. (To be slightly fair about all this, I should mention that *Slate*, Michael Kinsley's Microsoft webzine, has been an honorable exception.) But why is Microsoft's Accounts Payable so dreadful to deal with? It sounds counterintuitive, but the answer I come up with is that this institution has failed to grasp the potential of computers.

As a recent reader of *The Road Ahead*, I know a lot about this potential. A major theme in the book is the personalization of information. The new technology enables giant corporations to "customize"—to treat people as individuals, even when dealing with millions of them. The mass production we grew up with made it possible to produce millions of shirts in a number of different sizes. The new deal, Bill Gates tells us, will feature shirt-making machines that follow different instructions for every customer. Also approvingly cited is the work Levi Strauss & Co. is doing on custom-made jeans for women, which allow for any of 8,448 different combinations of hip, waist, inseam, and rise measurements. Fantastic, eh?

So why doesn't any of this carry over to Microsoft's own Accounts Payable, which still acts as though every last vendor has the exact same hips? Why does a chap trying to write articles in his study have to fill out an NSQ (new supplier questionnaire) that would be appropriate to a contractor erecting an office complex in Redmond, Washington? Why must he wrestle with the question of whether he is a "small business concern" as that term is defined in Section 3 of the Small Business Act? Or answer questions about the number of Subcontinent Asia workers on his payroll? Or about whether his organization is a Historical Black College? And, when each article is finished, why must he submit an invoice formally requesting payment?

And why do they keep changing the specifications for "a proper invoice"? The last time I tried to submit one, I was told to hold off and wait for instructions about new procedures being implemented by the AP operations manager. These turned out to include demands for an invoice number (you just make one up), a purchase-order number, a vendor ID number, and a Microsoft contact. And after you have done all this, as my own contact mentioned, it ordinarily takes four weeks or so to get paid.

An interesting question is whether Accounts Receivable is more attuned to life on the Road Ahead.

Daniel Seligman, author of* A Question of Intelligence: The IQ Debate in America, *is Microsoft vendor number 1104882.

THE PALESTINIAN WELFARE STATE

by Mitchell G. Bard

WHEN THE UNITED NATIONS VOTED in November 1947 to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, violence quickly broke out and escalated to all-out war. One byproduct of that war was the creation of an international welfare program for Palestinian refugees, disproportionately funded by the United States—a program that has persisted, inexplicably, for half a century. In fact, an entire division of the U.N.—the Relief and Works Agency, or UNRWA—was created to provide short-term assistance to the Palestinian refugees until they could be resettled and repatriated. That

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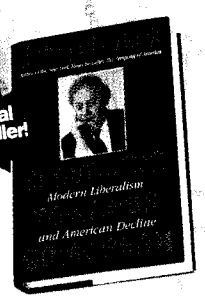

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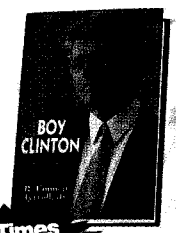

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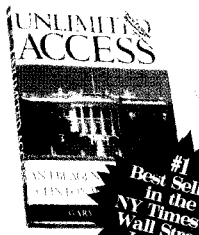

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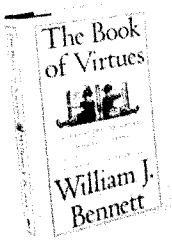

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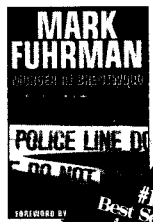

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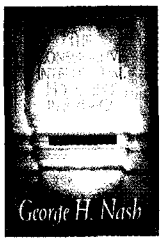

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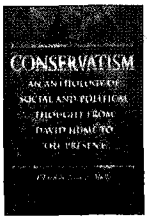

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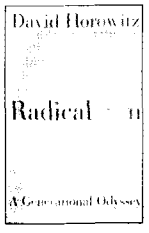

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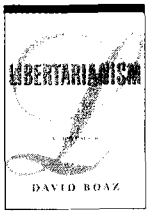

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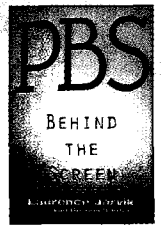

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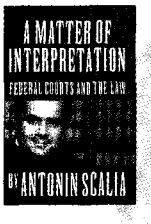

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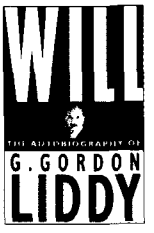

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short-term assistance mutated into one of the world's most entrenched bureaucracies.

It began as an act of temporary, pragmatic humanitarianism. Between 1947 and 1949, 400,000-700,000 Palestinians became refugees. On December 11, 1948, the United Nations adopted Resolution 194 which said that "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so" and instructed the Palestine Conciliation Commission "to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of refugees and payment of compensation."

The U.N. recognized that Israel could not be expected to repatriate a hostile population that might endanger its security. The solution to the problem, like all previous refugee problems, would require at least some Palestinians to be resettled in Arab lands. The resolution met most of Israel's concerns regarding the refugees, whom they regarded as a potential fifth column if allowed to return unconditionally. The Israelis expected the Arab states to resettle the majority of refugees and to negotiate a compromise on the remainder in the context of an overall settlement. The Arab countries were no more willing to compromise in 1949, however, than they had been in 1947. They unanimously rejected the U.N. resolution.

DEATHS WERE FREQUENTLY CONCEALED SO THE FAMILY COULD CONTINUE TO OBTAIN THE RATIONS OF THE DECEASED.

The General Assembly subsequently voted, on December 8, 1949, to establish UNRWA with a budget of $50 million. The United States contributed $25 million and Israel nearly $3 million. The total Arab pledges amounted to approximately $600,000. By 1996-97, UNRWA's expenditures were budgeted at $692 million; the agency had a workforce of more than 21,000 people. For the last four years, the agency's budget has had a deficit (at mid 1996, the figure was $45.2 million).

But in 1951, its director wrote in his annual report that he expected the Arab governments to assume responsibility for relief by July 1952—in effect, ending the need for UNRWA altogether. That didn't happen. By the mid-1950s, it was evident neither the refugees nor the Arab states would contribute to any plan that could be interpreted as fostering resettlement. The Palestinians considered "relief in general, and rations in particular, not as something to which they must show their entitlement, but rather as a right—as a partial payment by the world at large for their involuntary expulsion from Palestine and continued exile from their homeland," the agency's director wrote in 1955.

This attitude was exacerbated by the fact that most of the refugees were better off materially under UNRWA's administration than they had been in their original homes. Consequently, many destitute inhabitants of the countries housing the refugees sought and received ration cards from UNRWA. As early as 1950, the agency discovered that births were always registered for ration purposes, but deaths were frequently concealed so the family could continue to obtain the rations of the deceased. This trend was institutionalized over time, making it impossible to determine the true number of refugees.

By the end of the 1950s, the number of refugees had nearly doubled. Their treatment was described by the UNRWA director in 1958: "The Arab states do not want to solve the refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront to the United Nations and as a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders don't give a damn whether the refugees live or die."

This was evident when the U.N. tried to resettle 150,000 refugees from Gaza to Libya in 1950, but was rebuffed by Egypt. Syria was offered international funds to resettle 85,000 refugees in 1952-54, but declined. Iraq was expected to accept a large number of refugees, but proved unwilling. Lebanon insisted it had no room for the Palestinians. Jordan was the only Arab country to welcome the Palestinians (to this day, Jordan is the only Arab country where Palestinians can become citizens).

Rather than venting their displeasure toward the Arab governments for restricting them to camps, the refugees reserved their resentment for Israel and the West, which they held responsible for the injustice done to them. Not surprisingly, the camps became breeding grounds for extremists. Today, the number of refugees on UNRWA's rolls—more than 3.3 million—is roughly four times what it was when the agency was created to solve the problem.And less than one-third of the Palestinians live in the 59 UNRWA-run camps.

For the first 20 years, the United States provided more than two-thirds of UNRWA's funds, while the Arab states contributed a tiny fraction. The United States is still the organization's largest contributor, donating more than $80 million, approximately 25 percent of the organization's receipts from governments in 1994-95.

Nor will a final settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks, if there is a final settlement, solve the refugee problem UNRWA was created to deal with. The Declaration of Principles signed by the parties specifies that only Palestinians displaced in 1967—

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approximately 300,000—are eligible to be considered for repatriation. There is no mention of the Palestinians who left Israel and the West Bank in the 1940s. Thus, unless the United States puts an end to this taxpayer-sponsored welfare system for Palestinians, it will continue indefinitely.

What will happen, then, to the 3 million or so Palestinians still considered refugees by the U.N.? What should have happened 50 years ago—they will have to be resettled by Arab countries themselves.

Mitchell G. Bard is a foreign policy analyst and the author of **Forgotten Victims: The Abandonment of Americans in Hitler's Camps.**

You Must Remember This

by Duane W. Bailey

President Clinton is very keen these days on national testing of school children in the subjects of reading and mathematics. This is probably a good idea; a hundred years ago it could be argued that the local school board in a rural town knew best what education was appropriate for the children in that town. Most of them would probably settle there and lead lives somewhat similar to those of the board members. That argument cannot be made today when a majority of students will probably find livelihoods outside their home towns, perhaps in industries and technologies unimagined by local school boards. It is reasonable that parents at least know where their students stand on a national scale.

In the meantime, perhaps we need to consider a third test—a national memory test. One cannot help observing that, in recent years, public officials have been flashing "Out of Memory" signs at every turn. It is a paradox that, as the price of computer memory declines, the price of human memory steadily increases. Not even the highest offices in the land can attract people with half-decent memories. President Clinton, who as a candidate was touted as a Rhodes Scholar and a quick study on everything, can't seem to score above about 425 on an SAT scale for memory. ("I don't say it didn't happen. I just don't recall it. I have no memory of it.") Mrs. Clinton, once thought by many to be the smartest woman in the world, can't remember much about her experience at the Rose Law Firm or about its files. Vice President Gore has a particularly weak memory for small numbers ("I may have made a few calls. I just don't remember."), though he shows a remarkable grasp of "controlling legal authorities." His "few" seems to have been over 40, and he has completely forgotten that a portion of the money raised was spent on his own campaign.

Whole collections of people are memory-challenged. Nobody at the White House can recall who hired Craig Livingstone, the former security director who engineered their collection of FBI files; they had a dreadful time remembering even the approximate number of these files. They couldn't remember that the subpoenaed files on the 1996 campaign were, of all places, in the filing cabinet of the Democratic finance director, Richard Sullivan, until after he was called to testify by the Senate investigating committee.

The Democratic National Committee has a serious memory problem. The testimony of former chairman Donald Fowler before the Thompson committee might be considered in some circles as conclusive evidence of incompetence ("I have no memory of any conversation with the CIA," "I have in the middle of the night, at high noon, late in the afternoon, early in the morning—at every hour of the day for months now—searched my memory about conversations with the CIA and I have no memory of any conversations with the CIA").

There are exceptions, of course. There is a low-level Arkansas employee who claims a recollection of an encounter with former governor Clinton down to the finest "detail"; much better in fact than does Mr. Clinton, who "may have met her" but really "doesn't recall." There is also Sen. Robert Torricelli, of New Jersey, who can even remember events that occurred before his birth. But this is, as we say, the case that proves the rule. Shouldn't the scores of candidates for public office on a national memory test be an important part of their qualifications?

Just as in reading and mathematics, once we have sound evidence of the nation's memory, there will doubtless be calls for improvement, perhaps a national curriculum to encourage memory or a Program 2000 to ensure that our students have the best memories in the world. The least that we might hope for is that the Truman Foundation, which makes fellowship grants to prospective servants of the public, will establish a memory threshold of somewhat more than 20 minutes.

Duane W. Bailey is William J. Walker professor of mathematics at Amherst College.

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Has Fred Thompson Blown It?

By Matthew Rees

Fred Thompson hasn't had many good weeks chairing the Senate committee investigating illegal and improper activities in last year's presidential campaign. But in the week beginning September 15, the Thompson hearings finally started to generate serious public attention. A Clinton foreign-policy aide testified that the chairman of the Democratic party, as well as a CIA official, lobbied her to sign off on a meeting between the president and a shady, wealthy contributor. The contributor then testified about how President Clinton's advisers gave him the run-around after he contributed $300,000. The story provided the kind of theater Republican partisans had hoped for ever since Thompson started the investigation earlier this year.

But on Friday, September 19, Thompson dropped a bomb: His committee was going to shift its focus. For a few weeks, it would set aside the fund-raising scandals and concentrate instead on campaign-finance legislation. The announcement—there was no press conference, just a bland three-paragraph statement—immediately produced waves of criticism. "This is easily the worst congressional investigation in recent memory," says a well-placed Senate Republican aide. "He doesn't understand how to run a Senate hearing, and he never bothered to learn because Fred Thompson's agenda has always been Fred Thompson. He's trying to look bipartisan because he thinks that will win him the favorable media coverage he needs for his presidential campaign."

Thompson's about-face is only the latest action he has taken as chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee to mystify and enrage congressional Republicans and conservative partisans. Senate majority leader Trent Lott is foremost among them. Lott has concluded that selecting Thompson to lead the investigation into last year's fund-raising abuses has been the biggest mistake of his tenure.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HAS MYSTIFIED AND ENRAGED HIS COLLEAGUES AND CONSERVATIVE PARTISANS.

At the time, it seemed a brilliant choice. Thompson, after all, had experience in such matters—20 years earlier, he was the boy-wonder Republican counsel on the Watergate committee—and the image of cool authority that made him such an effective character actor in movies like *The Hunt for Red October* and *No Way Out* was perfect for a politically delicate effort that had previously been the bailiwick of the hilariously unpolished Al D'Amato.

It didn't take Lott long to grow disillusioned, especially when Thompson announced he wanted to expand the scope of the investigation from "illegal" activities (a subject that clearly put the Clinton camp at a disadvantage) into "improper" activities—which meant the investigation would likely spill over onto Republicans. Lott and Thompson tangled over this in February and March, and when Lott lost the fight, he publicly blasted Thompson in a story that made front-page news in one of Thompson's home-state dailies, *The Tennessean*. Now, after observing Thompson's conduct over the past nine months, Lott has a laundry list of complaints. He thinks Thompson has done a horrible job with the investigations and the hearings. He thinks Thompson's counsel, Mike Madigan, has been clownishly ineffective. And he thinks Thompson has been too tough on Republicans and too soft on Democrats.

Thompson's decision to shift focus away from Clinton's fund-raising to campaign finance last week—a decision that meant the first witness to follow the amazing Roger Tamraz was Washington talking head Norm Ornstein—was made without consult-

Matthew Rees is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard.

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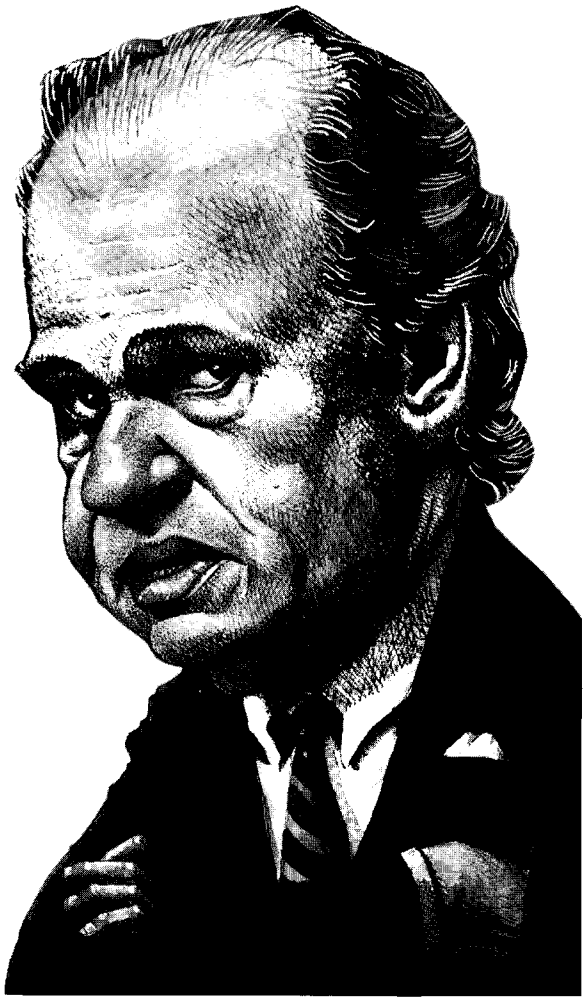
ing Lott. Now the majority leader's frustration with Thompson is so great that he'd like to shut down the hearings before any more damage is done.

Lott doesn't have the power to do that, but the sentiment captures just how unpopular Thompson has become with his Republican colleagues. Thompson's conduct has led to divisions in the GOP cloakroom greater than any seen since the 1990 budget deal. Some complain simply that Thompson has botched the hearings. But others dislike him because he is a free agent who is more interested in his own success than that of the Republican party.

The charges have some validity, though the complaints are also wrapped up in the jealousy Thompson's career inspires in almost anyone who thinks about it: After his Watergate celebrity at the age of 32, Thompson began practicing law in Nashville and litigated a case that drove a corrupt Tennessee governor out of office and into prison three years later. In 1982, he was, to his own amazement, hired to play himself in a Hollywood movie about the case of the Tennessee governor—and proved so likable and convincing that he became an A-list character actor making upwards of half-a-million dollars a year. This charmed life history made it possible for Thompson to get elected to the Senate in 1994 with no previous experience as an elected official, and to lead a major investigation into presidential wrongdoing, and to consider a presidential bid before he had even served a full term in Washington.



Sean Delonas

Thompson's meteoric rise may have reached its zenith. Not only does he make his Senate colleagues cringe, he may fall out of favor with the conservative, rabidly anti-Clinton voters who dominate Republican presidential primaries. Thompson still has time to make up lost ground, but not a lot of time. The committee's investigation officially expires December 31, and Thompson told me there's no guarantee that he will turn his committee's attention back to Clinton fund-raising abuses. If he doesn't, he will have trouble erasing the impression that he gave up on the hearings just as he was starting to draw blood.

Would that be a fair charge? Are the other charges against Thompson valid? Has he really been as bad, or as good, as people say? Consider the following counts in the anti-Thompson indictment:

He Delayed the Hearings at the Wrong Moment. Thompson is getting something of a bum rap here, even though he created the problem for himself. Releasing a three-paragraph statement on a Friday made Thompson look duplicitous, as if he were engaging in a stealth campaign to pass the McCain-Feingold campaign-finance bill he supports but which many Republicans loathe. Thompson acknowledges that "the signal from that little press release about changing the schedule did not have the desired message. I wanted no message at all other than that we were moving some stuff up."

The reality is that there wasn't going to be another week of hearings about Democratic wrongdoing in any case. Thompson had already agreed with committee Democrats to spend the week beginning September 22 looking into alleged Republican abuses. Moreover, Thompson had begun sounding out his committee colleagues about shifting the hearings away from abuses and toward campaign-finance legislation. Why? Thompson claims that, basically, he had run out of ammunition following the sensational testimony that caught the public's attention.

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Thompson's critics say both of these problems could have been easily avoided: Democrats never should have been given time to probe Republican transgressions, and if Thompson had maintained a capable staff there would have been more than enough material to keep things lively. There's a strong case, say Republican aides, for getting John Huang's secretary at the Commerce Department to testify and for hauling Gore confidants Peter Knight and Nathan Landow before the committee and asking them to explain their dealings with an Oklahoma Indian tribe. As it is, the one thing that can be said for Thompson is that by turning the spotlight on boring campaign-finance legislation, he delayed indefinitely a set of potentially embarrassing hearings for Republicans.

He's Using the Committee to Help Pass the McCain-Feingold Campaign-Finance Bill. Thompson is one of three Republicans in the Senate to support McCain-Feingold (McCain and Susan Collins are the others). Many Republicans believe that if the bill ever became law, it would wipe out the Republican party's majority in Congress, as it would restrict fund-raising from major sources of GOP money. Thompson and McCain have become pariahs among their Republican colleagues.

Thompson hasn't overtly lobbied for the passage of McCain-Feingold, though his support for it explains some of his behavior. A Republican willing to break so dramatically with his colleagues on campaign finance would be willing to conduct an investigation in which Republicans are targeted as well as Democrats. For if Republican abuses can be highlighted alongside Democratic abuses, overhauling the campaign-finance system—which McCain-Feingold would do—will look like an idea whose time has come.

In fairness to Thompson, however, the decision on September 19 to start campaign-finance hearings was of little significance. Yes, the committee heard testimony last week from individuals sympathetic to McCain-Feingold, but opponents also testified. Moreover, the first day of hearings last week was sparsely attended and received practically no media coverage. Thompson says he is surprised that "people think a few days of testimony from my committee that everybody claims no one is paying any attention to is going to change the future of the campaign-finance debate. It's kind of ridiculous." He has a point.

His Chief Counsel Is a Dud. Thompson's biggest liability, say Republican sources, is Michael Madigan, whom they blame for an array of substantive and tactical blunders. Committee aides say he suffers from an "NIH" problem. NIH stands for "Not Invented Here," and it means that if Madigan or one of his staffers isn't the one to come up with a lead, they're not interested in it. Turf battles are to be expected in Washington, but this one has severely hampered the majority's investigation. Thompson's staff doesn't get along with many of the other Republican staffs, and they're often pursuing completely separate agendas. Relations have descended to such a level that Republicans have stopped referring to Madigan by his nickname—"Mad Dog"—and started calling him something somewhat less flattering: "The Poodle."

THOMPSON'S STAFF DOESN'T GET ALONG WITH MANY OF THE OTHER REPUBLICAN STAFFS. TURF BATTLES ARE TO BE EXPECTED, BUT THIS ONE HAS HURT.

Madigan is an experienced litigator—he's a partner at the Washington law firm Akin, Gump—but he has stumbled when it comes to the byzantine procedures of a congressional investigation. Some staffers have taken to conducting their own investigations after being repeatedly rebuffed by Madigan.

Part of the problem is that he has failed to grasp the difference between conducting a congressional hearing and trying a case (more on that later). In addition, he has been exceedingly deferential to the Democratic staff, particularly chief counsel Alan Baron, who GOP aides say has regularly gotten the better of him. After watching Madigan pass up one investigative opportunity after another over the past nine months, one committee source asked, "Are we throwing the game or just shaving points?"

He Has Tried Too Hard to Be Bipartisan. There's a revealing passage in the book Thompson wrote after serving on the Watergate committee in which he quotes himself talking to Sam Dash, the committee's Democratic counsel: "The worst thing in the world for the Republican party would be for the Republicans on the Watergate committee to play an obstruction role and look like we're covering up the facts." This is an apt description of what this year's committee Democrats have done, especially John Glenn. Thompson assumed Glenn would be a modern-day Howard Baker, who served as the ranking Republican

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on the Watergate committee and was Thompson's boss and mentor. Baker tried to protect his party and his president, but was, in the end, interested in getting at the truth.

Why Thompson was so naive about Glenn's capacity for obstruction and subversion is a mystery. Thompson should have recognized that he was going to be fought every step of the way in January, when he requested a $6.5 million budget and was blasted by Glenn and the other committee Democrats for being a spendthrift. At that point, Thompson should have ignored their criticisms and proceeded without them. They would have screamed and yelled, but with a two-vote majority on the committee, Thompson could do just about anything he wanted, except grant immunity to witnesses.

Instead, he sought to win the support of Democrats for much of what he did, and was rattled by their non-stop criticism. Moreover, he allowed the committee to be used against Republicans, like former party chairman Haley Barbour. And even after the Democratic onslaught, he maintains, "You've got to not only be fair, but give the appearance of fairness. I've always thought that regardless of what we came up with, . . . unless we had credibility as a committee it wasn't going to matter much." In other words, Thompson believes, if Democrats charge the investigation is partisan, the committee will be compromised. But no matter what he does, the Democrats levy that charge. Thompson created a no-win situation for himself. It's no surprise he's losing more than he's winning.

He Doesn't Understand How a Congressional Hearing Works. Having spent a healthy chunk of his professional life arguing cases in courtrooms, Thompson brought to the investigation the same methodical approach a lawyer would bring to preparation for a trial. But congressional hearings don't work this way. You don't have to prove high crimes and misdemeanors to be successful; you just have to highlight inconsistencies and malfeasance. Thompson could have begun calling witnesses in February or March and started getting testimony on the record. Some of the witnesses would have been effective, others would have been a dry well. But it would have gotten the process started—no small matter considering the fact that the committee goes out of existence on December 31. Instead, Thompson wrangled with Democrats over everything from subpoenas to photocopiers. Thompson staffers argued they needed time to hunt down Clinton cronies like Charlie Trie and Pauline Kanchanalak. To no one's surprise, these characters never showed up, and the hearings didn't begin until July. This not only gave the opposition time to mobilize (and witnesses to flee the country), it heightened expectations about what Thompson was going to deliver far beyond what he could realistically expect to reach.

Thompson takes a dim view of this criticism. "You've got to investigate and kind of see where you are and what the facts are before you go public with them," he told me. "It's elementary. You can't just get out there and kind of wallow around with people who may or may not have any knowledge of the subject."

He Has Tried to Impress the Media. It would be a bitter irony if the biggest fish netted by Thompson's investigation were the man who played a key role in getting Thompson elected and getting Republicans into the majority, Haley Barbour. Skeptics believe Thompson gave subpoena power to Democrats—knowing full well they would go after Republicans—as a way to boost his political viability outside Washington. They think he wanted to show the country he wasn't a standard-issue politician, and that he would root out corruption on both sides of the aisle. Indeed, it is a simple fact that the Thompson committee did not have to investigate Republicans. Its original purpose was to go after the Clinton campaign for its fundraising abuses, which had become such a focus of concern in the fall of 1996.

What Thompson might not understand—and what he might have learned from the experience of his old boss, Howard Baker—is that one of the qualities conservative Republican voters like in a politician is a willingness, even an eagerness, to stand his ground and take the heat from the liberally biased press. Getting a reputation as an establishmentarian good guy doesn't cut it with the Christian Coalition.

Thompson says he has no regrets. He acknowledges some weeks have been better than others. But he feels the committee has succeeded in putting new pressure on Janet Reno, and he remains hopeful this pressure will result in the appointment of an independent counsel to investigate Gore. If that happens, Thompson will deserve some credit, though there's no guarantee he'll be given any. The irony in this is that had Thompson not bogged himself down and delayed the first round of hearings until July, he might have been responsible for revealing more information on Gore. As it is, the accomplishments of the Thompson committee remain unclear. Thompson may not have hurt himself all that much by staying out of the line of fire, but he hasn't made himself a hero either. ♦

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What Is—or Who Are—the Promise Keepers?

By Matt Labash

Look at Bob Diehl, and the word "warrior" doesn't immediately come to mind. He's a retired oil-industry analyst who favors short-sleeved dress shirts with leather suspenders and Puma sneakers. And he spends his days hunched in a gray cubicle at a nondescript office building in a seedy, stucco-shacked neighborhood in Denver.

But Bob Diehl *is* a warrior—a prayer warrior, more specifically. Every day, he comes to work with his Peanut Butter Ritz Sandwich crackers and 20-ounce Dr. Pepper. He looks up at the poster with the inscription: "Now is the time—this is not a game, this is not a rehearsal. This is War!" And then he prays—for lost souls, for revival, for the prayer requests that come in by fax and phone and e-mail. He prays most of the day, every day—excluding bathroom breaks and lunch.

His employers encourage this behavior. In fact, Diehl says, "This is the only place I've ever worked where the boss comes in and prays for me in the morning." The boss is Bill McCartney, and the place is the headquarters of the Promise Keepers, the Christian evangelical men's movement that has been packing the nation's football stadiums for the past several years and will pack Washington's Mall on October 4 for a rally the organization hopes will draw a million men.

In these quarters, Diehl's vocation is not that peculiar, for Promise Keepers is a ministry dependent on prayer. Its offices feature prayer lists and prayer boxes and glossy prayer journals. There is morning prayer and a 30-minute noon prayer. There is one open prayer room where the drones from accounting and legal and purchasing can drop in and pray. Then there is Diehl's prayer room, staffed by a rotating strike force of 20 or so prayer warriors (most of them women), with another adjoining private prayer room complete with a prayer altar and three kleenex boxes should the session get a little intense. When I asked Diehl, "Why all the prayer?" his answer was swift and certain: "Because there's no option, it has to be done—and it works."

Promise Keepers was founded in 1990 by then-University of Colorado football coach McCartney. In its early days, McCartney met with 72 men who fasted and prayed that more men would come together so that Promise Keepers could enact its mission: serving as a "Christ-centered ministry dedicated to uniting men through vital relationships to become godly influences in their world." And come together they have. Nearly every year since, attendance at Promise Keepers events has tripled or quadrupled. By last summer's end, 2.6 million men had attended PK events in 79 stadiums nationwide. And that's not including the hundreds of thousands of men that have attended over 265 PK regional conferences this year alone.

With an annual income of $97 million, and with a squad of 80 or 90 intercessors praying over every seat before a stadium conference, PK has hardly stopped there. Its ministry has been channeled into a television special, a 3-million-hits-per-month Web site, a radio show, scores of bestselling books, and a magazine with over 320,000 paid subscribers. More important to its leaders, PK has proliferated into approximately 16,000 small church-based men's groups that regularly meet using PK materials for Bible study and to hold each other accountable for the biblical principles that have been expounded. In just seven years, PK claims to have garnered either the interest or the involvement of 105,000 congregations (nearly one-third of all churches nationwide).

It will be little surprise, then, if Promise Keepers fulfills its goal of standing a million men strong on the Mall next Saturday. Just as they do during their less ambitious conferences, attendees will engage in worship and repentance for their dereliction of duty to God and family. The event is called "Stand in the Gap," based on the biblical precedent in Ezekiel of God searching vainly for a righteous man to stand in the gap between Him and a corrupt nation. PK leaders promise "no political speeches, no protests, no fireworks." Rather, the event's intent is to "present to the Lord godly men on their knees in humility, then on their feet in unity, reconciled and poised for revival and spiritual awakening."

But this stirring has incited another warrior, this one of the bomb-throwing, not-for-profit variety—National Organization for Women president Patricia

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Ireland. She has threatened to "rip the mask" off the Promise Keepers, though its activities to date could hardly be classified as covert. Where many see a teeming, sun-blistered mass of male-pattern baldness assembled for spiritual renewal, a self-described "political person" like Ireland can only "see lists."

She means fund-raising mailing lists, which she's fairly certain will deliver this socially conservative bloc (PK isn't terribly keen on homosexuality or abortion) to the highest political bidder. Coupled with the fact that PK's Memphis conference had three times as many women volunteers as NOW's Memphis conference had attendees, this is cause for concern.

But it gets worse. Ireland sees the "next wave" of religious rightists fraught with "serious inherent dangers," she told me during an interview in her Washington office. She's noticed they have "a cult-like aspect," that they are "very warlike," that they communicate in "Orwellian doublespeak," that they are authoritarians spreading "male supremacy in our families," that their goal is to repeal all women's rights with a theocratic sledgehammer, and that they are as great a menace to liberty as George Wallace, abortion-clinic bombardiers, the medieval Crusades, and the Afghani Taliban.

PATRICIA IRELAND SEES THEM AS A MENACE TO LIBERTY, WIELDING A THEOCRATIC SLEDGEHAMMER LIKE THE AFGHANI TALIBAN.

Ireland has even received calls from women who "are leaving a marriage because of their newly enthusiastic promise keepers." I asked her how many. "Only a couple," she said. I asked her if I could speak with them. "They won't go public," she demurred.

But in selfless sacrifice, Ireland has shuffled NOW's pressing agenda to focus on the Promise Keepers and the new "issues of violence" and the threat to women's "economic independence" the organization supposedly presents. The last month has seen Ireland teeing off in op-eds, on talk shows, and in a propaganda video that has NOW working in concert with watchdog groups like the left-wing Center for Democracy Studies, which itself has seen fit to start a *PK Watch* newsletter.

It's a fairly alarmist tack against a group that claims to have no political or legislative agenda. True, PK counts as friends openly partisan evangelicals like Pat Robertson, Gary Bauer, and James Dobson, whose Focus on the Family has published several PK books. But Promise Keepers is so intent on staying out of the political fray that it has no lobbyists, no PACs, no issue-advocacy guides, no politicians speaking at its rallies, and no mention of politics in its platform.

"If we were the sophisticated political organization we're accused of being, then we're either very naive or very stupid," says Promise Keepers spokesman Steve Ruppe. "Because we obviously forgot to mention who or what to vote for to the 1.1 million men we had in stadiums during the last election year. As individuals in an organization, we all have different opinions, but we're a Christian organization. The message of being in a relationship with Jesus is universal, it's devoid of politics. We're trying to reach all men, and many of those men are not right-wing Republicans."

This kind of talk, of course, doesn't cut it in the political trenches. And so Promise Keepers is a disconcerting force to those who don't know what to make of these men who stand unblinkingly behind the Bible as the inerrant word of God, and who freely bandy the name of Jesus in casual conversation without so much as an "H. Christ" following.

It's precisely their adherence to non-negotiable scriptural principles that has caused PK's uncomprehending critics to compare their rallies to Riefenstahl documentaries, to say they espouse a "veiled call to patriarchy," and to deride them as "shouting, sweating, stinking, HUGGING 'male warriors.'" (And that, from *The Door*, a Christian satire magazine!)

Chief among the tenets under dispute is that of "headship." This principle recognizes the husband as the nominal and spiritual head of the family—which is as politically untenable an idea as one could advance these days. And if one doesn't believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, or that scriptural mandates are sufficient to trump incontrovertible political fashions, then discussion quickly falls off. But if, as PK argues, the Scripture is a higher authority, then perhaps Ephesians 5:22-23 is worth a look: "Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church."

This is the inevitable disjunction with PK for everyone from feminists to more liberal clergy. Vats of ink have been spilled on this sensational subject, which becomes less sensational when you actually delve into the teaching. The same passage goes on to read "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. . . . In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself."

"Headship," then, isn't a brutish scruff-of-the-neck power grab, but a form of leadership rooted in ultimate

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sacrifice and servitude. Still, there is the much-quoted passage by PK speaker Tony Evans from *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, the movement's manifesto, in which Evans berates "sissified men who abdicate their role as spiritually pure leaders, thus forcing women to fill a vacuum. . . . I'm not suggesting you ask for your role back, I'm urging you to take it back."

Even here, however, Evans says that "your role" entails championing your wife over selfish pursuits, getting your family to church, and honoring your marital commitment even if your marriage isn't working. "A real man armed with biblical love sacrifices anything that interferes with his calling as a husband, father and churchman," Evans writes.

The seven promises outlined in the book are equally demanding. The pledges consist of: Honoring Christ through worship. Prayer and obedience to the Bible. Pursuing relationships with other men for accountability purposes. Practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity (PK discourages everything from premarital sex to pay-per-view porn "with or without masturbation"). Building strong marriages. Supporting churches through service, tithing, and praying for their pastors. Reaching beyond racial and denominational barriers. And, finally, fulfilling the "Great Commandment" (love the Lord with all your heart, love your neighbor as yourself) and the "Great Commission" (make disciples of all nations).

Just who are the Promise Keepers? According to the organization's own polling and figures from the National Center for Fathering, the average Promise Keeper is 39 years old and makes $48,000 annually. Thirty-three percent have been in the military, and 51 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. Eight out of 10 are married. Five percent are divorced, and 14 percent are remarried. They are 86 percent white, 5 percent black, 2 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Native American. They are 33.1 percent Baptist, 13.5 percent independent/nondenominational, and 9.5 percent charismatic/Pentecostal; of the other 23 denominational affiliations, from Nazarene to Roman Catholic, none exceeds 6 percent.

With its souped-up stadium spectaculars and evangelical demonstrativeness, PK has put off many on grounds aesthetic as well as doctrinal. For instance, denominational representation lags among mainline Protestants, who prefer the placidity of a restrained, cerebral liturgy sans the vein-opening and explicit Jesus-talk. "If you're sobbing or throwing up your hands in most mainline churches," says David Mills, editor of the evangelical Episcopalian journal *Mission and Ministry*, "the pastor will ask you to see a psychiatrist." Neither is all calm among the true fundamentalists (I mean the legalistic, big-belt-buckled, make-sure-your-daughter's-hemline-touches-the-linoleum fundamentalists). The Independent Baptists, for instance, have passed a resolution opposing involvement with PK.

Promise Keepers tries its best to steer clear of divisive theological thickets (it withholds comment on sacraments, gifts of the Spirit, etc.), which is why sticklers for doctrine find PK a bit light. But the organization clearly espouses an orthodox Christianity which necessitates belief in Christ's deity, virgin birth, sinless life, substitutionary atonement, and resurrection; and in salvation that comes only through faith in the redemption made possible through Christ's sacrifice. Speakers are expected to adhere to this theological grid.

Give its secular critics this: At first glance, Promise Keepers stadium events are custom-made for media bludgeoning. The revival-tent-cum-Lollapalooza-tour hokum quotient could make even a true believer recoil. Speakers often use words like "awesomeness," and it is the rare anecdote relayed without its subject's at some point having "tears in his eyes." Programs occasionally feature nerf theologians like Gary Smalley (Kathie Lee and Frank Gifford's relationships guru) who will psychobabble about creating a "safe environment" for men to emote.

And emote they do: batting beach balls, slapping high-fives, doing Jesus cheers, petting aisle-mates' latissimi dorsi, and singing tinny upbeat numbers accompanied by a dumpy, stonewashed house band who sound like they missed the last bus to Branson, Mo. In many of the conferences—when the preaching is good, and the Spirit moves, and one's feeling the sonic baritonal majesty of 70,000 men singing "Amazing Grace" a cappella—the whole place can degenerate into a heaving, sobbing mass of quivering love handles shaking their way out of lime-green golf knits.

But unappetizing as it sounds, what goes on at a Promise Keepers rally is not emoting for emoting's sake. It is largely worship, fostered by contrition. And worship, by its very nature, is a humbled expression of fealty—which often doesn't provide a dignified scene. As James Dobson says, "There's something in the human spirit that when you draw near to God, and begin to be obedient to Him, you respond that way. There is that God-shaped vacuum inside of us that longs for fulfillment. It was that same motive that took people to their knees in the Great Awakening, and that is what is motivating this movement."

The PK movement draws from many traditions.

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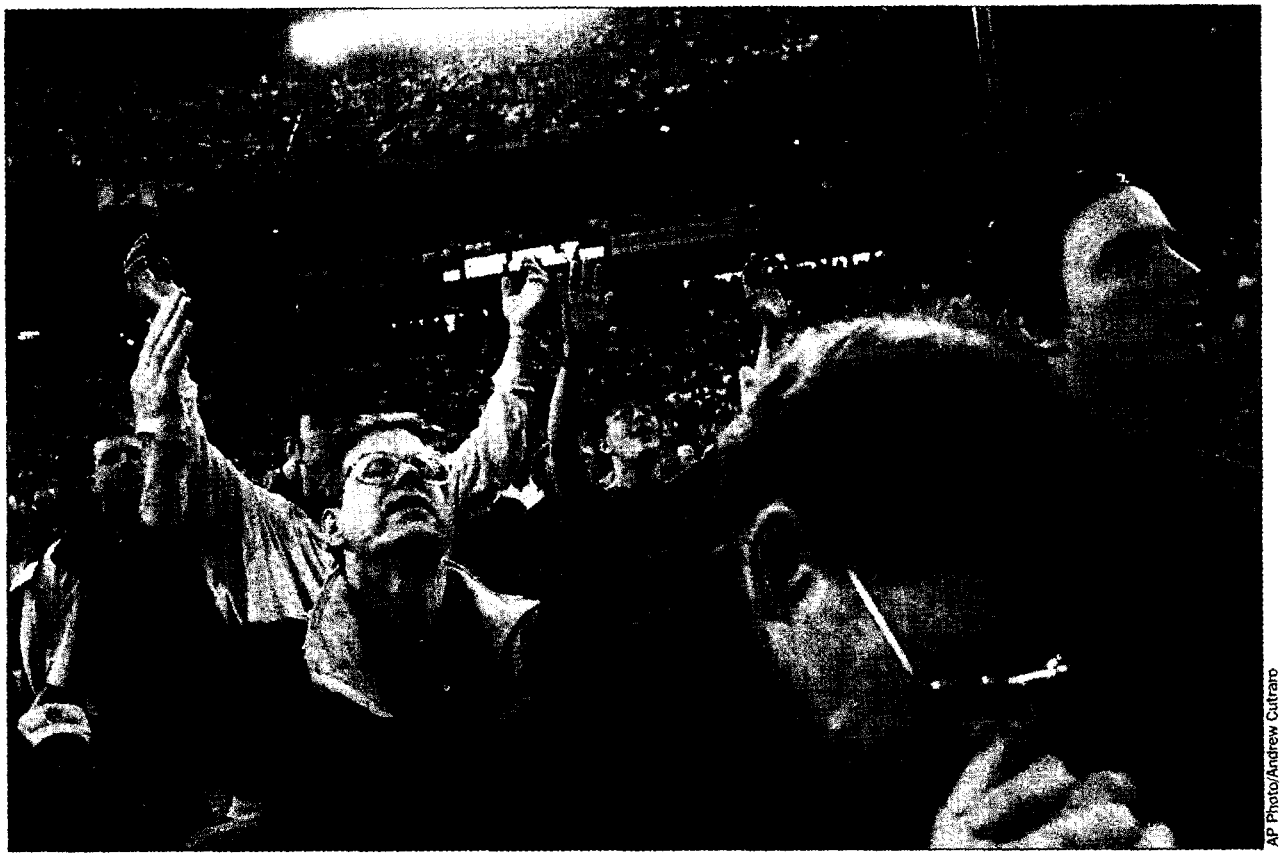

AP Photo/Andrew Cutraro

Stadiumania: 56,000 Promise Keepers filled the Silverdome last May in Pontiac, Michigan.

In its charismatic exuberance (the raised hands, the free worship) and popular trappings (football stadiums, contemporary Christian music), it is reminiscent of the Jesus Movement of the late '60s and early '70s. As campuses across the country were ignited by revival, ex-hippie converts evangelized after flushing their acid tabs in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. A few PK leaders, including McCartney, belong to the charismatic Vineyard denomination, which is directly descended from grown-up Jesus Revolutionaries.

Redoubling male church attendance has been a concern of church leaders since women began outnumbering men at services around the late 17th century. In that respect, PK mirrors the Men in Religion Forward Movement of 1911-12, when John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie took out ads in newspaper sports sections to draw men back to the pews by conducting men-only rallies in secular venues like Carnegie Hall. (The reason PK doesn't allow women to attend its rallies is so that husbands are convicted by God, not their wives).

PK's concern with effeminization mirrors the Muscular Christianity movement that peaked at the beginning of this century. Its chief gospeler was the Chicago Cubs second baseman-turned-itinerant revivalist Billy Sunday, who rained pugnacious neologisms on the heads of the "pink lemonade" church, the "tea-drinking, smirking clergy," and the early 20th-century version of the sissified modern man—"a sort of dishrag proposition."

The Promise Keepers has naturally drawn comparisons to both Louis Farrakhan's Million Man March and the secular "men's movement." And while it may bear some cosmetic similarities, PK differs greatly. Though Farrakhan beat McCartney in actual execution, the concept of a million man march was articulated by PK years before it was on the Nation of Islam's drawing board. Farrakhan's march ostensibly struck a comparable note of atonement and reconciliation. But the exclusively black, one-time assemblage concentrated as much on race-baiting and political scapegoating as it did on absentee fathers and irresponsible husbands.

Before the march, Farrakhan's ecumenical outreach was marginal, and following the march, anemic. Financial accountability, under the stewardship of the trusty Ben Chavis, was almost nonexistent, as anyone

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who has ever tried to get an answer out of a Nation of Islam press office knows. PK, on the other hand, is audited annually, and it includes financial statements accounting for all revenues in its press packets and on its Web site.

Farrakhan hungered for unity among divided black denominations exclusively. But racial reconciliation is where PK strikes the greatest contrast from its evangelical counterparts. Unlike, say, the Southern Baptists, who only recently confessed their antebellum racism, McCartney has made many a good ol' boy squirm by regularly hammering the "sin" of "white racial superiority," which, he says, is "insidious and ingrained in the fabric of our society." While much has been made of conference attendees' overwhelming whiteness, about 50 percent of the speakers are minorities. Additionally, PK has pledged a million dollars to rebuilding torched black churches. McCartney has reached out to minority pastors (visiting over 60 cities in two years). And during conferences, free or dicounted tickets (usually $60 a pop) are often given to disadvantaged minorities.

WHILE PK SOMETIMES SUCCUMBS TO A HUGGY-BEAR MAWKISHNESS, IT FOLLOWS, AT HEART, A TOUGH, EXACTING GOSPEL.

Some critics have suggested that PK's courting of minorities is a cynical media sop and hollow besides, since it does not discuss legislative redress for discrimination. (The same critics have it both ways, carping about PK inevitably entering the political sphere as religious-right saboteurs.) But what Promise Keepers lacks in affirmative action, it makes up for in "biblical intentionality." When I walked the halls of its offices in Denver, the personnel looked more pluralistic then a Benetton commercial (37 percent of the 368-person staff are minorities).

PK is also frequently lumped in with secular men's movements—Christ meets Robert Bly. But here, too, differences abound. Secular men's movements (which topped out around 200,000 adherents) are concerned with all things self, like self-discovery and self-recovery—in other words, reconnaissance missions for your lost masculinity. And while PK attendees have been known to squirt a few tears like the pose-striking cupcakes of Bly's men's movement, its rallies are mercifully devoid of the drama-queen penchant for self-victimization. Unlike PK, every strain of the last decade's men's movement has been about assigning blame, rather than assuming any. The pro-feminists blame their unenlightened Cro-Magnon counterparts. The fathers-rights groups blame their shrewish ex-wives. The foreskin-restorationists blame abusive obstetricians and mohels.

And most excessive are the receding ranks of Robert Bly's mythopoeia enthusiasts (those mad dancers and fierce-fanged men; those ancient, hairy beasts at the bottom of Iron John's pond). They spent thousands of dollars recovering their maleness by shedding heavy flannels in isolated glades to gather in sweatlodge percussion sections, chasing the ghosts of Jung and Joseph Campbell, and finally collapsing in sobs from the collective weight of feminist leavening, from the rape of the Industrial Revolution, from our lack of mythology, and from their old man's picking them up 30 minutes late from Little League.

Bly's movement paid lip service to the lost art of fatherhood and the familial responsibility PK espouses, but its only sacrament was self-absorption. And its only demand was the constant courtship of an onanistic love affair—a "ménage à moi," as movement guru Sam Keen shamelessly phrased it.

While PK occasionally succumbs to a huggy-bear mawkishness and therapeutic elements, it does not glory in self-deification but in the subjugation of self to a transcendent deity. It is, at its heart, a tough, exacting gospel, a biblical model of manhood that calls for the faithfulness of Abraham, the devotion of David, the wisdom of Solomon, the righteousness of Job, and the humility of Moses.

It is difficult at this young stage to gauge the impact of the Promise Keepers, though zeitgeist-chasers are always tempted to proclaim any quake of evangelical zeal to be the next Great Awakening. Already PK has more than twice as many conferees—2.6 million—as America had people at the time of the First Great Awakening in the 1730s. Those famous revivals, however, weren't limited to men, and they involved a much greater share of a far smaller population. It's hard to see PK altering the country's fabric the way the First Great Awakening laid the groundwork for the American Revolution and the Second fueled the abolitionist movement.

But the PK phenomenon has come about amid the same conditions that preceded the Great Awakenings: a licentious society, complacent and brittle churches, moral and spiritual decay. More important, the Promise Keepers places a similar emphasis on conviction of sin, repentance, return to Bible-based teaching, a strong ecumenism, and the "concert of prayer" that Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, Jeremiah Lamphi-

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er, and all the great 18th and 19th-century revivalists believed had spawned their movements.

The Promise Keepers' fixation on prayer is in keeping with a largely unreported wave of prayer for revival that has swept the evangelical community over nearly a decade. The Southern Baptist Convention issued a broad call for revival complete with fasting and solemn assemblies in the late '80s. Christian demographers estimate that 170 million Christians are praying for worldwide revival. And the president of Concerts of Prayer, David Bryant, has amassed a 70-page directory of full-time prayer ministries whose sole intent is to intercede for revival. "Stand in the Gap," says Bryant of this week's Promise Keepers rally, "isn't just a spontaneous watershed. It's an answer to 10 years of prayer."

But macro-comparisons aside, truly understanding who the Promise Keepers are is perhaps best done by taking measure of their leader, Bill McCartney. When this self-described "militant for the Gospel" asserts that he's "an ordinary guy with an extraordinary God," it's not hard to believe. McCartney wears tinted Rosemary-Clooney glasses and has the low bangs of a television weatherman. The son of a Marine, he never spent a day in seminary, and so his messages are laced with populist football and military imagery. His rhetorical flourish is all down-at-halftime immediacy: General Patton meets Bo Schembechler. He was an assistant coach at the University of Michigan under Schembechler until he went to Colorado, where he was anything but ordinary: McCartney led the team to nine postseason bowl games in 10 years. He also won three consecutive conference championships and a national championship before walking away from a $350,000 a year contract in 1994 to spend more time with his wife and consecrate himself to the ministry. (He remains unsalaried at Promise Keepers, and last year made all of $48,000 from speaking honoraria.)

After persistent efforts, I still couldn't secure an interview with McCartney, who staffers say is focused solely on Stand in the Gap. So much so, I learned from his friend James Dobson, that McCartney is praying and fasting for 40 days leading up to the event. Instead, I read his 1990 autobiography, *From Ashes to Glory*, which no one will mistake for Jonathan Edwards's "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" when it comes to literary or theological merit. McCartney's book is of the Jocks-For-Jesus, as-told-to genre—replete with exclamation points and scores of clichés set off in quotation marks. One can almost visualize the target reader: the beef-fed, trapezial pubescent, idling in his pew, hoping the preacher wraps it up before Mom's Sunday brisket dries out and the Cowboys game starts.

Such books follow certain conventions: general illiteracy, metaphoric groaners that equate two-a-day practices with spiritual rigors, and pornographic recall of game-day minutiae. But McCartney's book is a surprise, all the more so since it was written in the year of his national championship and before his PK ministry really took off. Rather than tales of true grit and clipboard prowess, *From Ashes to Glory* is chock-full of McCartney's every frailty, broken promise, and failing as a husband, a coach, and a servant of God. This is not the seedy, sexy, aren't-I-a-bad-boy exhibitionism of the modern memoirist; it is, rather, a testimony of spiritual reflection and exemplary transparency, the kind of trasparency Jonathan Edwards extolled when he was exhorting his "fellow worms" to exhibit Christ's "lowliness, mildness, meekness, gentleness of spirit and behavior."

McCartney recounts how he failed his daughter (who was impregnated by his starting quarterback), how he neglected his wife even when teaching other men to exalt their spouses, and how he continuously falls short of God's standard. In a 296-page book, his national championship and coach-of-the-year honors are dispatched in half a paragraph. And of the meager 11 pages dedicated to his crowning achievement, Promise Keepers, nearly three are dedicated to pull-quotes from his wife, who recounts how long it took McCartney to actually practice many of the principles that he espouses during his cross-country barnstorming. If there's a whit of hypocrisy, heresy, or general unseemliness inherent in the Promise Keepers movement, chances are critics won't be able to point it out before McCartney gets the drop on them.

THE SON OF A MARINE, MCCARTNEY NEVER SPENT A DAY IN SEMINARY, AND SO HIS MESSAGES ARE LACED WITH FOOTBALL AND MILITARY IMAGERY.

In his upcoming book, *The Choice*, the venerable international evangelist Sammy Tippit quotes Southern Baptist Convention president Tom Elliff saying, "Inevitably, revival comes on the wings of someone (or ones) who are willing to stand before a congregation with brokenness and absolute transparency and say, 'This is what has happened in my life, and I need you to forgive me. My heart is completely for God.'"

With McCartney and the Promise Keepers, God may have found His men. ♦

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Ted Turner says the rich don't give enough.

Ted is wrong.

If you have substantial wealth you cannot avoid giving most of it away:

- to the government in estate taxes,
- to others during your lifetime, or
- to a foundation where others will do the giving for you.

The real question is will you be smart about your giving.

The failures of the welfare state (and the UN, for that matter) demonstrate that giving -- even big giving -- is not enough. Giving is an investment and good investing requires knowledge and the benefit of thoughtful experience. Why not spend a small fraction of the time you devote to earning your wealth to thinking about how to give it away?

The Philanthropy Roundtable is an association of more than 400 foundations and individual donors, dedicated to fostering smarter giving. If you are a person of substantial wealth, we offer you state-of-the-art information on effective philanthropy. Just write, call, fax or email us with your name and address and we will send you a copy of our newest guide, ***Questions to Ask Before You Write the Check***. We will also send you ***Philanthropy***, our quarterly magazine covering the latest issues and best information about what works in philanthropy.

You are going to give anyway, so why not give smart?

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The Birth of a Great Nation

How Republicans Invented the Federal Government

By David Brooks

Thirty-nine days after Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, a good chunk of the victorious Union army returned to Washington, D.C., for a final review. President Andrew Johnson, his cabinet, General Ulysses Grant, and other dignitaries stood on the reviewing stands while for two days, from dawn until dusk, 200,000 troops marched past. General Meade led his Army of the Potomac from Capitol Hill past the White House and out through Georgetown. General Sherman led the western armies. And as he turned off Pennsylvania Avenue at the Treasury building, Sherman pivoted and looked back at his troops who stretched toward the Capitol. "The sight was simply magnificent," he remembered later with emotion. "The column was compact, and the glittering muskets looked like a solid mask of steel, moving with the regularity of a pendulum. . . . It was, in my judgment, the most magnificent army in existence—sixty-five thousand men, in splendid *physique*, who had just completed a march of nearly two thousand miles in a hostile country, in good drill, who realized that they were being closely scrutinized by thousands of their fellow countrymen and foreigners."

Wilfred McClay beautifully describes the scene in his 1994 book, *The Masterless*, and as McClay notes, the Grand Review marked an important moment in American nationalism. Four years earlier, the Union army had been an aesthetic and military shambles. Some states dressed their soldiers in purple Oriental blouses, some in emerald, some in red fezzes. But by 1865, the Union solders had been molded into a single, powerful, all-blue force.

Yet for all the machine-like rigor of the Review, this was still an American force, and therefore highly individualistic. Idiosyncratic characters like Walt Whitman and Bret Harte reported on the march for their countrymen. The Civil War didn't crush American individualism, but it did alter the magnetic poles of American life. Before the war, the two great forces were the individual and the locality. After the war, the two great poles were more likely to be the individual and the nation.

Heather Cox Richardson
The Greatest Nation of the Earth
Republican Economic Policies During the Civil War
Harvard, 336 pp., $35

Economics doesn't exactly match the pomp and drama of military affairs, but the story of economic policy during the Civil War is essentially the same. Before the war, it was the states that issued currency and conducted nascent economic policy. The national government did little more than deliver mail, impose tariffs, and conduct foreign policy. But after the war, the United States had a national economy for the first time. The federal government issued currency, built railroads, funded training colleges, and promoted economic growth. While Abraham Lincoln was busy overseeing the war, congressional Republicans embarked on a great era of legislative activism, dramatically strengthening the national government.

Today, those Republicans—like William Pitt Fessenden and Justin Smith Morrill—are little known. Liberal historians sometimes seem prejudiced against them because they were not proto-New Dealers. Conservatives tend not to look to them for guidance because they opened a Pandora's box that led to the great expansion of federal power that culminated in the Great Society and the era of big government. But in fact, the early congressional Republicans were vigorous conservatives, whose basic assumptions about the uses and limits of government still form the core of the Republican tradition. And today's Republicans could do worse than to emulate their positive approach.

The story of their policy is told fairly, if not scintillatingly, in Heather Cox Richardson's *The Greatest Nation of the Earth: Republican Economic Policies During the Civil War*. There were, she shows, three pillars to Republican economic thought during the Civil War: labor, small enterprise, and harmony of interests. Republicans believed that man was made to work. As one Republican editor reminded his readers, God had decreed "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Most of the Republican members of Congress were self-made men. Many had scratched their way up after the early deaths of fathers or mothers. Fessenden, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and later Lincoln's treasury secretary, was born a bastard and rose through stiff and dogged perseverance.

David Brooks is a senior editor of The Weekly Standard.

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Thus, they had reason to believe that in a land of open competition any person could rise to prosperity through hard labor. They loathed the large landowners in Europe who kept the workers there propertyless and perpetually poor. They opposed the southern aristocracy and the caste-like structure of southern life. And they were suspicious of concentrated wealth in any form. They believed instead that America could be a fluid and classless society. *The Communist Manifesto* was over a dozen years old when the Civil War began, but American Republicans rejected the inevitability of class conflict. "We are certain," the staunchly Republican *Philadelphia Inquirer* editorialized during the war, "that . . . there is no enmity of interest between capital and labor, but an actual unity of interests."

Democrats then, like Democrats now, were more likely to see society as a series of conflicts between classes and groups. But Republicans believed that if all Americans worked hard and competed openly, then all would prosper together.

It was an optimistic creed, and Republicans were extraordinarily optimistic about America's future. The party foresaw a time in which "a score of mighty and prosperous States, the pride of the Republic and the admiration of the world, will leap forth from the great valleys, prairies and forests of the West like youthful giants rejoicing in their strength."

Republicans were suspicious of government. They thought it was more corruption-prone than private business, and they were afraid that a large public sector would destroy competitive labor markets. But as the war went on, they found more ways to use government that would not violate their principles (or at least not much).

The first great expansion of federal power was overseen by Lincoln's first treasury secretary, Salmon Chase. The Union was desperate for money to pay the troops. Chase issued federal war bonds. At first he sold them to banks and financiers, putting Alexander Hamilton's face on the initial issues. But Treasury officials got into terrible rows with bankers over bidding procedures and fair prices, so Chase marketed the bonds to the masses.

The popular offering was a huge success, and the bonds put northerners into contact with the federal government in new ways. The bonds began circulating as currency. Bond drives stirred up national feeling. Republican faith in the small businessmen who bought the debt was enhanced. Americans felt more independent from Europe as they discovered they could raise capital among themselves rather than running to London or Paris. America is "today the most powerful nation on the face of the globe," one Republican congressman told a crowd in 1864. "This war has been the means of developing resources and capabilities such as you never before dreamed that you possessed."

The second dramatic federal policy was the creation of a national currency. One historian has estimated that there were 7,000 different kinds of bank notes in circulation before the Civil War, not including counterfeits. States issued currencies, but they were sold at discount beyond their own borders; as Richardson explains, a $10 bill from Maine might go for $8 in Boston or $5 in New York. In the West, there was an acute shortage of reliable currencies.

Looking to enhance nationalist sentiment, and hoping to raise money, Chase proposed a national currency. Desperate for funds, the House Ways and Means Committee opted for a paper-currency plan—the bills would not be redeemable for gold and could therefore be printed more readily. And so began a debate that lasts to this day. Democrats opposed the law, fearing any expansion of federal power, and in the hurly-burly of debate, financial pressures proved decisive. Lincoln signed a paper-currency bill into law on February 25, 1862, and greenbacks began to flood through the country. They were immediately popular, and the Union did not become victim to the same inflation that afflicted the paper currency of the Confederacy.

The Republicans were developing a taste for federal power, and in 1864 they went overboard. The country was becoming alarmed by the rapid fluctuation in gold prices. Americans were disgusted by the unseemly behavior of the traders in the Gold Room in New York, which they felt was being manipulated by southern infiltrators. In the spring, Chase proposed a bill that shut down the Gold Room and outlawed trade in gold futures. Lincoln signed the bill on June 17. The price of gold immediately skyrocketed. Gold futures trading went underground, and five days after Lincoln had signed the original bill into law, the Senate voted to repeal it. Lincoln signed the repeal two weeks later.

The Republicans had learned a lesson about the dangers of interfering with the markets. But they did not give up on federal power. Republicans also revised federal tariff policy during the war, built the railroads, created a federal income tax, and instituted the land grant colleges. The tariffs are the touchiest issue for present-day Republicans who admire the party's founders. The entire party was protectionist, believing that restricted trade served economic nationalism. Republicans argued that if the nation depended on European products it would never be "Americanized."

Then as now, Republicans raised taxes with great trepidation. Nonetheless, in need of revenue, the Republicans created the Internal Revenue Bureau and imposed a 3 percent value-added-tax on manufacturing. Their debate on the income tax seems quaint. In 1864,

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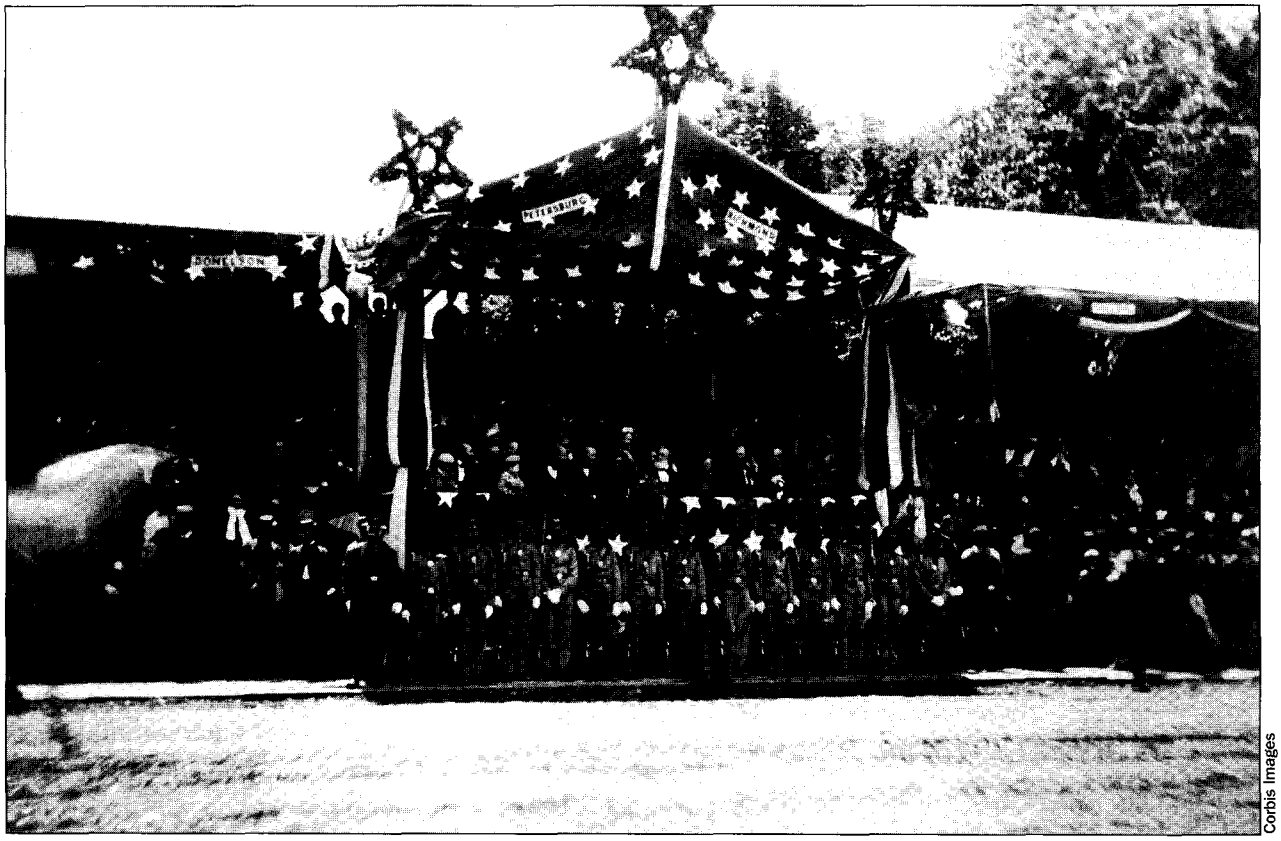

Corbis Images

The birth of big government? A reviewing stand for Union troops in Washington.

some Republicans proposed a progressive tax, 5 percent on income over $600, 7.5 percent on income over $10,000, and 10 percent on income over $25,000. Others were appalled, arguing that it was "vicious" and "unjust" to tax rich people at higher rates. Justin Smith Morrill argued against such "inequality," maintaining that "the man of moderate means is just as good as the man with more means, but our theory of government does not admit that he is better." In the end a tax that was not quite flat prevailed, and Steve Forbes had his first Republican antecedent. Except in one respect: All these taxes expired by 1872.

Republicans went on to use government to promote economic growth. The Homestead Act, the Land Grant College Act, and the creation of the Department of Agriculture were all designed to boost farm production, which Republicans regarded as the foundation of national and moral wealth. Republicans, who had harbored nativist sentiments before the war, became friendly to immigration during it, hoping to attract more and better labor. Lincoln asked Congress to set up a bureau to recruit immigrants, arguing that new Americans were "a source of national wealth and strength." And most memorably, the Republicans pushed through transcontinental railroad legislation to open up western development.

The railroad legislation was problematic for the early Republicans because they distrusted public enterprises. They went through a series of tortured efforts to set up the transcontinental operation as a private concern, with the rigorous controls and management of a for-profit business. They never quite perfected a private/public management structure (who ever has?), but they persevered, believing that America could not become "the greatest nation of the earth," as one Republican put it, without this sort of sweeping enterprise.

As Republicans energetically used the federal government to champion their conservative vision of the American destiny, Democrats defended states' rights and argued that the Republican programs were unconstitutional. But the Democrats were never able to mount an effective opposition. Heather Cox Richardson (an assistant professor of history at MIT, not the prominent conservative activist Heather Richardson Higgins) maintains that the story of the Civil War Republicans is a tragic one, because the society they ushered in contrasted violently with the one they envisioned. They hoped to create a classless society of open competition, small enterprise, and social mobility. Instead, she writes, the ensuing Gilded Age featured consolidation, large enterprises, and class

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conflict. Perhaps, but it is hard to evaluate her thesis because the economic life of the Gilded Age lies outside the scope of her narrative.

The Republicans' economic policy may have produced an America that was more cruel than the one they dreamed of, but it did lead to an America that was every bit as great as its champions envisioned. Their central animating ambition was to make America the most dynamic nation on earth, and they certainly accomplished their aim. By creating a federal government that was energetic but not bloated, they did propel America into the first rank of nations. They did manage to tie a vision of national greatness to a set of mostly sensible economic policies. And for that, the forgotten Republicans like Chase, Fessenden, and Morrill do deserve high admiration and respect. ♦

COCKEYED OPTIMISTS

The Thernstroms Take on Race in America

By Dinesh D'Souza

Just about every new book on race mourns the lack of candid discussion of the subject, deplores the hot-tempered rhetoric on all sides, and proclaims its mission as one of rising above the shouting and eschewing the simplistic positions of both liberals and conservatives. Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom begin their book in precisely this way, announcing that they are challenging the orthodoxies of the Right ("There is no racism") and the Left ("There is nothing but racism").

Stephan Thernstrom
Abigail Thernstrom
America in Black and White
One Nation, Indivisible
Simon & Schuster, 480 pp., $32.50

Oddly, however, hardly any conservatives are criticized by name. The authors proceed to identify the right-wing position with one Jared Taylor, a white-power advocate who is hardly a mainstream figure. I am unaware of a single reputable conservative who espouses what the Thernstroms call the "see no evil" view that denies the existence of racism (or a history of racism) in the United States.

What the Thernstroms are doing, in other words, is posturing. Even as they bewail the dishonesty and self-righteous rhetorical positioning of the race debate, they are performing some dainty pirouettes themselves aimed at attracting the accolades of liberal reviewers. The Thernstroms recognize the need to take other conservatives to task in order to win favorable mentions in the *New York Times* and the *New Republic*.

Still, the main thrust of *America in Black and White* is directed against the liberal view the authors explicitly identify with Andrew Hacker's 1992 bestseller, *Two Nations*. Although influential, Hacker's book reflects the most extreme position among liberals. It asserts, without offering a shred of evidence, that America is a chronically racist society and that racism is likely to remain a permanent feature of the national psyche.

The Thernstroms devote the better part of 500 pages, including scores of tables and charts, to refuting this view. They review the history of black progress in the past half-century and show that blacks have made impressive strides in education, earnings, and political power. Indeed, while the legal changes enacted during the civil rights era may have consolidated these gains, the Thernstroms point out that in many areas, black advancement was no less rapid between 1945 and 1964 than in the two succeeding decades. They also chart the trajectory of improving race relations between whites and blacks.

The Thernstroms are at their best when they are discrediting liberal shibboleths. One example is their persuasive critique of Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton's book *American Apartheid*, which attributes many of the continuing problems of the black community to the fact that black housing patterns are roughly as segregated as they have ever been. Longtime affirmative-action critic Nathan Glazer credits the Massey-Denton book with his newfound support for racial preferences for blacks. But the Thernstroms offer strong evidence that should compel Glazer to reconsider. In 1970 only 3.6 million blacks, or 16 percent of the black population, lived in the suburbs. In 1995 that number increased to 10.6 million, or 32 percent of the black population. Even in the inner city, most blacks today live in mixed-race neighborhoods that include substantial numbers of whites, Hispanics, and Asians.

Moreover, statisticians measure residential segregation by positing as ideal a neighborhood in which blacks make up precisely their proportion in the general population. Scholars use an "index of dissimilarity" to chart departures from this norm. The Thernstroms show the limitations of this device. They cite surveys showing that most blacks prefer to live in neighborhoods with black popula-

Dinesh D'Souza is a John M. Olin fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. His new book, Ronald Reagan: How an Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader, *will be published in November by the Free Press.*

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tions around 50 percent. What all of this means is that the enforced patterns of inner-city segregation Massey and Denton allege are greatly exaggerated, and that homeowner preferences, which Massey and Denton discount, are an important factor in determining the residential distribution of groups.

Of *America in Black and White*, the authors write, "This is an optimistic book." Based on the historical record, the Thernstroms' hopeful outlook seems justified. But if they have done a thorough job undermining the extreme position that blacks as a group have not made progress over the past several decades, they face a more serious challenge in dealing with the more nuanced position, held by many liberals as well as conservatives, that for black America this is the best of times as well as the worst of times.

This position holds that despite the rapid gains of the past, blacks face serious obstacles in advancing at a similar pace into the future. The reason is that even middle-class blacks are uncompetitive with their white counterparts on virtually every measure of academic achievement and economic performance. Moreover, the miseries of a substantial subset of the black community—the underclass—have deepened in recent decades, with no sure sign of abatement.

Consider one bit of data the Thernstroms themselves cite: Blacks from families earning over $70,000 a year have lower SAT scores than whites from families taking in less than $10,000. This is an amazing statistic, and by itself, it destroys the liberal insistence that standardized tests merely measure socioeconomic status. It is also fatal to the general liberal attribution of black underperformance to white racism: How could racism conspire to make poor whites perform better on reading and math tests than upper-middle-class blacks?

So if the liberal position that blames black failure on societal deprivation is fallacious, how to explain such outcomes? On the right, there are two camps. The first, identified with Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, attributes black underperformance to intelligence differences between groups that are, in part, hereditary. Now *The Bell Curve* may be—I believe it is—a flawed book, but it advances serious claims based upon a wealth of data. The Thernstroms, however, coolly dismiss it by asserting that "we strongly differ from Herrnstein and Murray" and "we do not find IQ a useful concept." These pieties may be sufficient for those already bitterly prejudiced against *The Bell Curve*, but many scholars who recognize the importance of IQ as a predictor of social outcomes are bound to find the Thernstroms' treatment of Herrnstein and Murray frivolous and unconvincing.

The alternative position, identified with Thomas Sowell, emphasizes cultural or behavioral differences in family structure, crime rates, study habits, rates of business formation, and so on, as largely responsible for why some groups do better than others. The Thernstroms seem closest to this view. At various points in the book they make references to broken families and the drug trade as obstacles to black advancement. But they are careful not to embrace the cultural argument, and it is not hard to see

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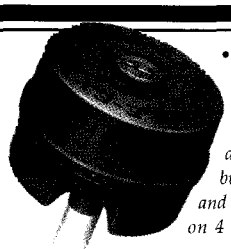

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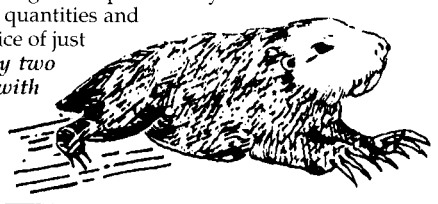

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why: Doing so would undermine the optimism that the authors believe is their signature contribution to the contemporary race debate.

Yet is this optimism warranted? The story of black progress registered in the Thernstroms' book is largely the consequence of liberalized attitudes toward blacks and the steady elimination of legal barriers to black advancement in such spheres as education, employment, and politics. But that work is largely complete. As the Thernstroms' data show, blacks generally enjoy equality of rights under the law. The main factor holding blacks back today is not racism but the inability of blacks to take full advantage of the opportunities that are now available.

So black progress in the future mostly depends on a change of attitude and behavior within the African-American community. Presumably this would also require a new outlook on the part of the civil-rights leadership, or the emergence of new leaders to replace them. Public policy can help, of course, but its influence on the private domain of marriage rates and homework habits is limited. Consequently, the main responsibility must lie with the black community itself.

For all its impressive scope and valuable data, *America in Black and White* offers no evidence that any of these internal changes are taking place. Nor do the authors even advocate cultural reform as an indispensable prerequisite for blacks to advance more rapidly in the next century. The best reason to be optimistic about America's racial future is the success of the non-white immigrants, which has far outpaced that of indigenous blacks. If there is a case for feeling good about the prospects of African Americans, that case is not effectively made here. ♦

HAIL, CEASER!

A Profound Effort at Reconstructing America

By John S. Gardner

The idea that America is a cultural and philosophical wasteland might seem merely a byproduct of this American century. But on the Continent, the notion long predates "Coca-colonization," McDonald's, and EuroDisney. James Ceaser, professor of government at the University of Virginia, has written an important book, *Reconstructing America,* about the European image of the United States, showing the ways in which philosophers of both left and right have constructed a symbolic America often bearing little resemblance to the place itself.

James W. Ceaser
Reconstructing America
The Symbol of America in Modern Thought
Yale, 273 pp., $30

John S. Gardner is a research analyst in Washington, D.C.

America, as Ceaser demonstrates, has occupied a prominent place in European intellectual history. From one perspective, this is curious: If one is, say, Heidegger, and is not sure about democracy in any event, then why bother with America at all? In short, America has long been perceived by European intellectuals as a threat to order, to culture, even to philosophy and science.

Surely part of the anger against America is the European frustration at rejection of the old ways. America symbolizes the modern—a dynamic nation less tied to notions of the past than Europe. And, of course, America is a threat also because of its very attractiveness—its economic power, democratization, and the pursuit of riches.

All this bounty supposedly leads to cultural banality or, in Heidegger's view, alienation from Being. Heinrich Heine declared that "this-worldly utility is the American's true religion, and money is his only God" (a point made earlier by Washington Irving, who coined the phrase "the almighty dollar" and decamped for Europe at the earliest opportunity). Unaware of Being, we produce bad movies and Disneyland. We Americans supposedly so confuse the real and the artificial that we no longer desire the real; we are, in the words of Alexandre Kojève, unthinking "automata." Nor can the bacillus be contained: Because America represents the end of history, symbolic America for the philosophers is the frightful destiny of Europe.

Ceaser suggests that these and other European thinkers are members of what he calls the "school of difference," which stresses the primacy of cultural groups. Ceaser outlines the direct connections between racialist thought beginning with Arthur de Gobineau and much of the modern "politics of difference"—what has come to be known as multiculturalism. These he places in sharp contrast to the "humanitarian" ideas of the American experiment and its vision of the unity of mankind, beginning with Publius in *The Federalist*, who held the humanistic view. As Ceaser puts it, in words evocative of Tocqueville:

> The American experiment interests the world not just because it may humble the European and cast doubt on the idea of a hierarchy of human varieties, but also because it offers an alternative

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account of the primary source of differentiation in human affairs. The most important differences derive not from distinctions among biological varieties of man, but from differences caused by moral and political factors. The political regime can be decisive. All peoples could take heart in an American success, because it would show what is possible for them to accomplish by political action.

What of today's multiculturalism? Ceaser notes the surprising extent to which supporters of multicultural theory believe that Enlightenment-inspired ideas such as liberalism and rationalism are responsible for oppression in modern society. America, then, as a country of the Enlightenment, is seen as a symbol of oppression. Further, Ceaser writes that "this new multicultural historical narrative has striking parallels to the positive image of America as depicted in classical racialist discourse"—each reflecting the dominance of white Anglo-Saxons.

Ceaser has a broader purpose than the examination of philosophical anti-Americanism. *Reconstructing America* is, at its core, an apologia for political science—"the inquiry, guided by political philosophy, into the factors that preserve and destroy different regimes." In Ceaser's view, this inquiry depends on the "humanitarian" outlook that made the American experiment possible. The European philosophers whom Ceaser discusses "looked for something deeper than political activity as the main factor controlling human destiny"—racialist, or nationalist, or tribalist identity. Ceaser criticizes those who would use a sociological approach to politics, whether it is Jefferson in *Notes on the State of Virginia* or contemporary postmodernists. Ceaser's goal is explicit: "In seeking to free the real America from the symbolic America, I am also hoping to restore political science to its rightful place in our way of thinking" and carve out a distinctive place for American political science.

IF CEASER DEFENDS AMERICA IT IS NOT OUT OF PATRIOTISM BUT FROM BITTER EXPERIENCE.

Ceaser makes a profound case that the task of political science is a noble one—not least because true political science eliminates race as a factor in political thought. In this century especially, we have seen the kinds of wreckage that can ensue when bad regimes take center stage; the effort to determine what makes a good regime and how to propagate it elsewhere is literally a matter of life and death. If Ceaser defends America, it is not out of patriotism but from bitter experience. However great its failings, America *has* recovered the idea of political science and preserved and expanded liberty for its citizens.

Reconstructing America is wryly written, even fun. Ceaser on postmodernism: "Until now, philosophers have only changed the world; the point, however, is to play with it." And Ceaser illustrates Kojève's idea that America represents the end

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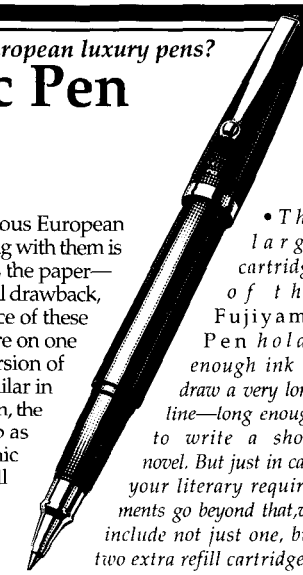

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of history with reference to its application in the movie *Star Trek VI*.

This book is a timely corrective to loose thought in the academy and a candid appeal to reason—even though many of Ceaser's opponents are, in their opposition to Enlightenment categories of thought, literally un-reasonable. It's really too bad Tocqueville never actually wrote that "America is great only because she is good," because the ersatz quotation is a perfect expression of Ceaser's wise approach. ♦

He Don't Know Jackie

A Hagiography of a Ballplayer Misses the Mark

By Jonathan V. Last

More and more, the world is driven by Events—Event movies, Event trials, and Event anniversaries, each one bigger and more significant than the last. In such an atmosphere, genuine milestones get the same treatment as Earth Day: an enormous splash of attention, a mad rush to make money, a climactic anniversary ceremony, and then it is time for the next Event. Such seemed to be the case with the 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's debut in the major leagues in April: a massive press blitz followed by silence. But now we are going to relive the event again, at least in the book review pages of the nation's press, because the first major biography of the ballplayer is just being released.

Arnold Rampersad
Jackie Robinson
A Biography
Random House, 512 pp., $27.5

Arnold Rampersad's *Jackie Robinson* is a furiously impressive piece of research. The Princeton professor has left little unsaid about his subject, from the intricacies of his athletic craft to the unappetizing details of his wedding night. But while Rampersad offers us too much information, he does so in dry and uninspiring prose. He has written a boring book about an extraordinary man.

Rampersad divides his book into three acts: Robinson's life before, during, and after baseball. It is the middle passage that goes furthest toward educating the reader about Robinson, even though this is the phase of his life with which we are best aquainted. Yes, we know that the Dodgers gradually grew to accept and eventually love Robinson, yet it is invigorating to read the account of the stir that was created when Ralph Branca caught Robinson in his arms as he fell into the dugout while chasing a foul ball.

Rampersad views Robinson with a sense of distanced awe, which, in the end, is vaguely demeaning. In a 1953 interview, Robinson said of his increasingly frequent on-field outbursts, "Do they think I do things deliberately to harm my popularity? I do them emotionally. I do them to win. . . . Maybe it's because I like to win more than some of the others. Maybe I take defeat harder. . . . I am not carrying the cross for the Negro people." Rampersad, hearing words from the mind of a champion, cannot leave well enough alone. He feels the need to clarify what he thinks Robinson *really* meant: "Robinson had taken upon himself to carry forward his people's struggle against injustice. At whatever cost to his happiness, he would continue to scream when he felt pain, lash back when unfairly attacked, shout the truth in the face of power."

Rampersad views Robinson as an avenging angel of race relations. The final third of the book looks extensively at Robinson in his role of crusader for racial justice. As great a second baseman as he was, he was horrendously naive and politically immature, yet he felt himself fit to hold forth on politics regularly, both in speeches and in his newspaper columns. He may have pioneered the Elvis Presley form of executive communiqué, sending telegrams to sitting presidents telling them what he thought of current events and what actions he expected of them. We can hear his high-pitched, agitated voice earnestly telling Nixon upon his retirement in 1962, "I hope that you will reconsider, Dick, because it is the great men people attack. You are good for politics; good for America." And then, a few years later, with similar conviction, "If Nixon is elected president, we as Negroes are in serious trouble."

Rampersad tries to paint Robinson as a vigorous statesman, but the truth is that for all his intelligence, he displayed no understanding of the political process nor any desire to learn. The story of Robinson's life is sadder still; Rampersad shows us that after a youth in which he could do no wrong athletically, he proved to be a flop in almost all of his endeavors. Whether it was the department store he started, the real-estate deals he made, the insurance company he founded, or his exploits in the political arena, Robinson was a failure in almost everything but life on the diamond.

Through a fabulous chain of circumstances, Jackie Robinson was chosen to be the first person to run the gantlet of segregation with the

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whole of America bearing witness. It was his burden that he was not an avenging angel, or a saint, or a martyr, but simply a man, and we forget sometimes how terribly difficult that can be. Robinson's greatness was not that he was all of the things Rampersad wants him to be, but that he was none of those things and yet still answered his call; he would not allow himself to fail his race or his country. Jackie Robinson was not a great entrepreneur, or writer, or politician. He was a hero. ♦

L.A. INSUBSTANTIAL

It's Just a Melodrama

By John Podhoretz

"Come here, Sidney, and let me chastise you." So says a corrupt cop to Tony Curtis before he beats Curtis to a pulp in 1957's *Sweet Smell of Success*, a memorable movie full of purple chunks of dialogue that no actual person would ever speak—certainly no thick-necked New York City policeman on the take. The beauty of *Sweet Smell of Success* is that, despite its highly realistic look, it is at its heart as stylized, moralistic, and fantastically violent as a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale. You would be foolish to watch it on American Movie Classics if you wanted to know what life was really like back in the bad old 1950s.

If you have been reading reviews of *L.A. Confidential*, the new movie about corrupt cops at loose in Los Angeles in the 1950s, you may have gotten the impression that it is a blistering look into the dark heart of the American past. That sort of praise, which has been hurled at *L.A. Confidential* by every paper in the country, reveals yet again that people who spend their lives in movie theaters soon forget what the world around them is actually like. Like *Sweet Smell of Success*, *L.A. Confidential* is also a fairy tale run riot, a story of corrupt cops and gangsters and hookers and journalists on the loose in the 1950s that doesn't merely strain believability—it shreds believability for the sake of high-pitched melodrama. It is a very good melodrama, and you should go see it by all means. But don't be fooled; *L.A. Confidential* is a movie that has absolutely nothing of value on its mind.

The movie tells the story of three cops who each get hold of a single strand in a tangled murder-and-corruption case. The first is Jack Vincennes (Kevin Spacey), a glad-handing, sharp-dressed detective who works as the technical adviser on a TV cop show and moonlights by making busts that will be good fodder for a scandal sheet called *Hush-Hush*. The second is Ed Exley (Guy Pearce), the straight-arrow son of a famous detective who agrees to turn informant on a bunch of other cops in order to get his own detective badge. The third is Bud White (Russell Crowe), who has both the impassivity and the terminally violent streak of a pit bull. When six people are killed in a coffee shop late at night—among them White's ex-partner—a gigantic conspiracy slowly emerges involving higher-ups in the police department, a pornography-and-prostitution ring, and the development of the L.A. freeway system.

What's most surprising about the movie is that the characters are not static, as we have come to expect from Hollywood police procedurals. Bud White, who seems like a psychopath at the beginning, turns out to be a man of twisted honor by the end. Vincennes, who walks the streets of Los Angeles like he knows all, turns out to know absolutely nothing about the true workings of his city. And Exley, the incorruptible one, turns out to be the most morally ambiguous of all. It was a clever decision by director Curtis Hanson to fill his three leading roles with journeymen actors, because their very anonymity (even Spacey's, despite the fact that he won a supporting-actor Oscar a few years ago) makes it possible for us to examine them clinically and come to our own conclusions about them. Russell Crowe is a particular revelation, delivering a performance as infinitely shaded in its way as Al Pacino's indelible breakthrough in *The Godfather* 25 years ago.

Still, *L.A. Confidential* is nowhere near as clever as it thinks it is, and is riddled with modern Hollywood clichés. The system is, of course, inherently unjust; if anything bad is going on among the rank-and-file cops, it turns out that such ill behavior pales in comparison with the behavior of the politically savvy types at the top. In the 1960s and 1970s, when politicians and cops and military men and rich people all became the moral equivalents of gangsters in Hollywood's post-Vietnam reckoning, the idea at least had a little novelty. Now, however, it would seem shocking, almost disturbing, to see a movie in which the system *did* work, and justice *was* done. Such a movie would haunt us on the drive home, make us think. A movie like *L.A. Confidential*, which prides itself on its complex and nuanced view of human behavior, is no more disturbing to our cliché-ridden sense of America and its institutions than a Muzak version of "Why Don't We Do It In The Road" would be. ♦

John Podhoretz is deputy editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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"At dessert [actor Ron] Silver got up to offer a toast and remarked that there were a number of people present who had given something important to their country. He then asked all who cared to do so to talk about what they thought their greatest sacrifice had been. Nearly everyone answered."
— *Sally Quinn, in "Party Protocol: Confessions of a Washington Hostess,"*
The New Yorker, *Sept. 29, 1997*

Parody

PERSONAL HISTORY

MORE PARTY PROTOCOL

Confessions of a Washington Hostess, Part II

BY SALLY QUINN

HILLARY Clinton is so witty and charming that when she looked up from one of Kay Graham's fingerbowls with a gleam in her eye, I knew whatever she said would be delightful. "Many of us have made great sacrifices for the good of humanity," the First Lady commented. "Why don't we take turns talking about them?"

Even though Eliot Richardson was already four sentences into his description of his own crusade on behalf of the Law of the Sea Treaty, the gathered luminaries succeeded in imploring Mrs. Clinton to go first.

Her account of her own charitable acts will always rank as four of the most moving hours of my life. But as I listened to her touching testament, I couldn't help thinking of my own sacrifices, which have taken place in the venue known as the Washington dinner party. I have written often about the manners of the Georgetown elite, at first with tartness and wit and later with redundancy and gentle sycophancy, but then I am invited to so many parties that you are not invited to, and I feel it my duty to bring a bit of my glitter to your humdrum little lives.

One evening a few years ago, I was seated between Colin Powell, who is so wonderful and brave, and Arthur Schlesinger, who is perhaps the most brilliant man in human history, when Richard Holbrooke, who is wonderfully self-effacing, stumbled in late and found Richard Darman sitting in his seat next to Jane Alexander. "Why don't we go around the table and talk about the sacrifices each of us has made on behalf of the Dayton peace accords?" Holbrooke suggested.

"No," Darman countered, "Why don't we talk about the contributions each of us has made to the long-term fiscal health of this nation?" I believe this was in the fall, the time of year when I convert to Judaism so I can get invited to Bill Safire's annual Yom Kippur party, and I broke the tension by standing up and reciting the mourner's kaddish for Pamela Harriman.

It was either Aristotle or Clark Clifford—whoever is older—who said that food at a Washington dinner party can never be too bland. And as Mrs. Clinton finished her four hour tribute to herself, I took a final satisfying bite of my boiled pea casserole whilst glancing at the Greek ambassador, who had had a stroke and died on his plate in the midst of the First Lady's remarks. The President was ushered in, looking disheveled and joyful. "Ben," he said to my husband as he took his seat.

"You were close to Jack Kennedy. Why don't we take turns talking about which of our recent Presidents best embodies the values of this nation?" Nearly everyone answered. ♦

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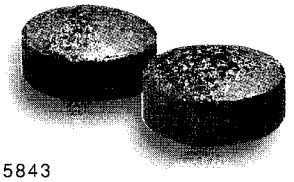

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